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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 4 April 1996

Jeudi 4 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 avril 1996

*The House met at 1001.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr Michael Brown moved private member's notice of motion number 10:

That in the opinion of this House, since the northern Ontario heritage fund belongs to northern Ontario, and represents a small share of the resource revenues to the province from the resource sector, and is an important tool for improving economic, social, and health conditions in the north, and since the former New Democratic Party government transferred the legacy of northerners to the consolidated revenue fund of the province of Ontario, and that Premier Harris has expressed his deep concern about the disappearance of the funds from the trust account; therefore, the government of Ontario should return the funds with interest to the trust; update the mandate; and put the funds to valuable use for the people of northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): You have up to 10 minutes, each of the other parties will have 15 minutes, and you'll have two minutes to wrap up.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I think the resolution pretty much speaks for itself. For members to understand this, I think we need to know a little of the history of the northern Ontario heritage fund. It was established in 1988. It was established by this House with a very broad mandate. If you read the act, you will find that many things can be done. As a matter of fact, virtually anything that northerners would feel important can be done, given the mandate of this act.

It was felt at the time by the government of that day that it was important for northerners to further refine the mandate. It was said so repeatedly in the House, and that in fact is what happened, that the board of the northern Ontario heritage fund, a group of northerners, decided what the objectives of this fund would be within the broad mandate. That was very important and was a key component of the way this fund was to work. The second part of the fund was a commitment for \$360 million over 12 years that would be put into the heritage fund, \$30 million each year, every year, for 12 years. That was important.

At the time we had a rather interesting debate. The opposition, at that time New Democrats and Conservatives, were terribly concerned that the \$30 million would not be put in every year, and as members know, that concern has proved not to be a problem. Every year the

government of Ontario has put \$30 million into a trust account, and that's equally important to understand, that that \$30 million went into a trust account so that if it wasn't spent in any given year, it could accumulate and so would the interest on it. That is another very important element to know.

So what we had was a fund administered by northerners, did not require them to spend all the money in that given year, and it accumulated. Governments put in the money. And lo and behold, a month before the last general election in this province, the government of Ontario took a sizeable chunk of that money and took it out of the trust fund and put it into consolidated revenue, never, as we know around this place, to be seen again. That surprised me. It surprised me that there was no press announcement. No one in this province knew that it had happened. It was done, so to speak, under the cover of darkness. The New Democrats did not go out in the last election campaign and wander through northern Ontario saying, "We took \$60 million of your money and sent it down to the consolidated revenue fund"—not a word. They were not very proud of what had happened, but they figured it was under cover of darkness.

So my resolution today is ultimately reasonable. I believe that the New Democratic Party government stole the legacy of northerners, of the people of the north. It was their money. They stole it. They took it from us and they put it into the consolidated revenue fund.

So logically you could say, "Gee, that's too bad," and that's what Mr Harris is saying, "It disappeared," but from where I come from, if you are in possession of stolen funds you're as guilty as the one who stole it. So what we're saying is that Mr Harris obviously understands that the money was taken out of the trust fund, is no longer in the trust fund, that accrued interest could be spent by northerners for northern concerns and was transferred to the consolidated revenue fund. He was quite upset. He's quite upset about that. It disappeared. We saw wonderful press releases all across the province. He was outraged, but he's got the money.

So there's a solution, and the solution is rather simple. If you are in possession of what he believed—and he said "robbed." If it was robbed from the people, then you can put it back. I think that makes eminent sense, because a basic concern to me is we're losing the interest on that money. It's not being accrued to the fund. If you think of the interest on, say, \$60 million, if that's the correct figure, although I've heard a number of figures, that's almost enough to fund, over the next five years, a full additional year of heritage fund operations. And why do we need it? We need it so we can improve our health care, so we can diversify our economy, so that we can do something about the appalling conditions of northern

roads that have been neglected terribly in the last five years. So that's why we need it.

I would suggest to the House that it's just perfectly reasonable. Update the mandate. We agree it should be updated. Say to northerners: "Look, the mandate needs to be massaged a little bit, it needs to be broadened. There are some things that work, there are some things that didn't. Let's change it." It's eight years since the fund was started. It makes sense. Update the mandate and let's start getting that money out into the northern economy, out to northern people, out to fix northern roads, out to ensure that there are physicians. Whatever that board of northerners decides, let's make sure they can do it and let's make sure that money is there.

Mr Speaker, I'm going to reserve the rest of my time for my windup, if that's possible, and cede my place to other members.

1010

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I rise to take part in this debate, which is on an issue that is probably the most dishonest and silly that I've encountered in all my years in the Legislature. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin is compounding the silliness and the dishonesty of this issue. I can tell you that right now.

When I read in the paper under the byline of Jeff Harder, Queen's Park bureau, Davos, Switzerland, where he was travelling with the Premier—the headline is, "Ontario Coffers Missing \$100 Million"—an outright lie. If Jeff Harder was a reporter of any substance or significance, he should be reported to the Ontario Press Council, but because he's not, I won't bother doing that.

I can tell you exactly what happened. A year ago, there was in the coffers of the northern Ontario heritage fund a lot of money. The heritage fund is allowed to spend \$30 million a year on northern heritage fund projects—\$30 million a year.

Interjection.

Mr Laughren: I didn't interrupt the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

There was in the fund over \$100 million sitting there while we're out borrowing money on international markets at a greater rate than that money was receiving sitting there. So we said, what's the sense of having over \$100 million sitting there in a pool, drawing less interest than we're paying on money that we were borrowing? How does that make any sense? You'd have to be some kind of idiot to have a fund sitting there and then go out and borrow money that's costing you more than you're getting.

All the heritage fund was allowed to spend was \$30 million a year, so we said rather than leaving all of that pool just sitting there, we negotiated with the heritage fund and you know what? When the heritage fund annual report was brought down for the year 1994-95, guess who signed it off as being appropriate? Chris Hodgson, the honourable Minister of Natural Resources, responsible for the heritage fund. He signed it off. So either he didn't know what he was signing or he didn't understand it or he was part of the big lie from Davos, Switzerland, and the Toronto Sun. That's what it came down to.

I have never in my life seen anything so silly, because the money is there. Do you know how much money is in

the heritage fund right now? It's probably even more than this: about \$80 million, and on April 1 it was supposed to have transferred into it another \$30 million. So there's still \$110 million sitting in the fund. So where does the headline, "\$100 Million Missing" come from? From Jeff Harder and Mike Harris, who were cuddling up together in Davos, Switzerland. That's exactly where it came from.

If the Tories want to spend more money in northern Ontario, they've got the money in the fund now. Do you know how much—

Interjections.

Mr Laughren: I'm not trying to tease the bears. Would you just calm down and let me finish this?

This is what's so laughable about it and so dishonest, what the Tories did. Here you've got this money there, about \$100 million sitting there, and at the same time do you know how much money the Tories spent since they got elected? Do you know how much money?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Who was the Treasurer who lost \$60 million? Who was the Treasurer?

Mr Laughren: Oh, listen to the member who comes to northern Ontario and then crosses the border to eat his supper in the United States; won't even eat in Fort Frances. I don't need a lecture from you. I don't need any lecture from you on northern Ontario. The people in the north rejected you people for good reason.

Let me finish my story, Mr Speaker, and I trust you'll allow me the right to do that, because the yahoos over there don't want to hear the truth.

Since the Tories formed the government, despite the fact there's \$30 million in the fund, guess what the Tories spent out of that fund? Zero, a big fat zero, no money at all. How's that for a commitment to northern Ontario? And then they come up with a big lie that says there's \$100 million missing. There's not a penny missing, not a penny.

If you want to spend more money in northern Ontario, go ahead and spend it. You haven't spent it at all. Do you know how often the northern Ontario heritage fund board has met since you people formed the government? Zero, not one meeting. So tell me about a commitment to northern Ontario. What I want to hear is some Tory with some integrity stand up and admit that this was nothing but a big lie. Do you know why? You're trying to cover up your ineptitude in northern Ontario and the fact that you've abandoned the north.

This party, when we were in government, had no apologies to make. We did more for communities in northern Ontario than you ever did or ever will do. All you've done is cut norOntair service completely out—norOntair, servicing small communities—took it right away from people. You have reduced road maintenance budgets all across northern Ontario. You have done nothing. And you've turned the forests, instead of being owned by the people, over to the private sector. You are a laughingstock in northern Ontario, a complete laughingstock. Please don't give us any lectures about money in northern Ontario.

I chose my words very carefully when I talked about this being a big lie, because that's all it was. Between the Premier's office and the Toronto Sun, they thought they

could bamboozle people in northern Ontario. They're not that stupid, and the evidence of that is that they rejected you in the last election.

Mr Murdoch: It certainly gives me pleasure to speak to this motion today, and to Mr Brown from Algoma-Manitoulin. Some of his resolution is good and some of it is not so good. I thought we should talk about it and go through it.

His resolution says, "That in the opinion of this House, since the northern Ontario heritage fund belongs to northern Ontario...." There's nothing wrong with that and I certainly agree with that. That's a good statement and I think we all can agree with that, that the fund does belong to northern Ontario and that's where it will stay. There's no problem with that statement in your resolution.

It says the fund "represents a small share of the resource revenues to the province from the resource sector." Right on. I can agree with you on that—no problem with that. That is right on and there's no problem with that. The resources in the north should be shared by the north. For too long have the resources gone to southern Ontario and the north hasn't had its share. I will agree with you on that—no problem there.

The fund "is an important tool for improving economic, social, and health conditions in the north." Right; that's what it was for. Unfortunately, sometimes with some of the previous governments it was given to different people who made unfair trading, unfair commerce, things like that. But you're right, that's what it was supposed to be used for, and we can agree with that, can agree with that all the way.

Now we get into some trouble. "[A]nd since the former New Democratic Party government transferred the legacy of northerners to the consolidated revenue fund of the province of Ontario...." That's a shameful thing. We just heard from one of the ministers of the previous government that had six or seven ministers from the north and did absolutely nothing for the north—stole money from the north, stole the money and put it in the revenue fund so that when they had an election they wouldn't look as bad as they were. They left us with a \$100-billion debt and they stole \$60 million from the northern fund to try to cover it up. They stole it right out of the fund, put it into the revenue, thinking all the time—and I don't know how they ever felt this—that they would win the election and they'd be able to sneak it back in and nobody would know.

1020

Then we have the former Treasurer stand up and say this is a lie. I'm disappointed that he would do that. I know he did a lot of things in the past five years: put us \$50 billion more in debt, left us with a \$100-billion debt, \$10 billion a year in debt he put this province in, and then stole \$60 million out of the north, which he represents, along with six or seven other ministers. They were in the north and did absolutely nothing for the north and then they can stand here today and talk about how they looked after the north?

This is utterly ridiculous, utterly ridiculous. Here's what they did: They took away the money from the north, from their own legacy, stole the money.

He goes on to say, "Premier Harris has expressed his deep concern about the disappearance of the funds from the trust account." This is true.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South is out of order.

Mr Murdoch: Our Premier is from the north, along with the Treasurer. They are concerned about this. As you will know, Mr Speaker, we travelled the north and came out with a voice for the north, and in that voice for the north we committed to keeping this trust fund in the north—not taking money from it to put into consolidated revenue, like the former government did. The former government took \$60 million out of the fund, took it away from its northern friends, from the people of the north; took it out and didn't even bother to tell them about this. If you can believe this, they thought they would get re-elected. I don't know how they ever thought that. They thought they could take the money out, put it in the consolidated revenue and then put it back when they got elected. Unfortunately, they didn't get re-elected—probably fortunately for the rest of us, for Ontario. It is really unfortunate that this would happen.

In this resolution, the member from Manitoba—from Manitoulin—

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: Maybe he should be from Manitoba. The member from Manitoulin, and I know that's where he lives, says, "the government of Ontario should return the funds with interest to the trust." I can understand why the member from the Liberal Party would want us to try to put this money in, and I'm sure that anyone thinking about it would want to do that too, but I challenge the member, you tell me where we can find this money, you tell me where the money is. We were left with a \$100-billion deficit from 10 years of free spending by the Liberals and by the NDP, 10 years of free spending by these—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Mississauga South on a point of order.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Mr Speaker, it's been a few Thursdays since I've been attending private members' business, and this morning I'm here on behalf of another colleague. I ask you to call this House to order. Interjections, particularly from a member who's not even in his seat—we now have young people in the gallery. I ask you to either eject the members or call them to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: You're out of order.

Mr Murdoch: It's unfortunate that the members from the north don't want to listen to this. They have stolen money from the fund and now they are afraid to face the facts.

Back to the member who put the resolution forward. I challenge you, you find the money. After 10 years of free spending by your government and by that government there, you have left this province in debt to the tune of \$100 billion. Now you come around and say, "Oh, put the money back in." That's what the Liberals would do, raise taxes to put it back in. Is that what you would do?

You already did that 30-some times in your three years of government, and then you left it up to these guys over here. Of course they just went on a spending spree and left us with a \$100-billion debt. Those members from the north over there can say we don't have a clue. Well, the ratepayers of this country, the people in this country voted and told you that you didn't have a clue over there. What they didn't realize is that you'd stolen \$60 million from the north, from your own people. This is terrible. Now the member wants the heritage fund updated.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Cochrane South will not be warned again.

Mr Murdoch: On this resolution, while I say it has its good points and its bad points, I can support it. The fact is that our member over here is going to find the \$60 million for us. He probably wants to raise taxes, but that's nothing unusual for a Liberal government. Updating the plan is what we're doing right now. Our deputy minister is working hard on doing that right now. It needs redirection, no doubt about it; after being in the hands of the Liberal government and the NDP government, there's no doubt that it does need redirection, and that's what is happening.

I can promise you that the funds will be used in the north. The \$30 million that goes into that fund annually will be put into that fund, and that fund will be used on projects that the municipalities want in their municipalities. We will be listening to the people in the north, not taking the money from them and dumping it into the consolidated fund, like our friends from the NDP, who had seven members in the north who were ministers who allowed this to happen. You can't believe how upset the northern people are about this. Unfortunately, they don't go back home any more to listen to them, and this is the problem. Then they got away with doing this, thinking they were going to get elected.

As I've said, this resolution has its good points and its bad points, but I think overall we can support it to see that the things will go on, that the funds will be updated and that the \$30 million that goes in every year will be put back. I challenge the member over there on his resolution to help us find the \$60 million. We cannot raise taxes.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): It seems to me that the member for Nickel Belt doth protest too much, or the member for Grey-Owen Sound would like to support the resolution.

I'm very pleased to join this debate today, and I want to thank my colleague the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for providing us with something this government has yet to do, which is an opportunity for open, honest and forthright dialogue on the matter of economic development in northern Ontario.

I think it's important for us to discuss the heritage fund today and to do a bit more of a history lesson because, almost to the day, we are at the eighth anniversary of the introduction of the heritage fund in this House by René Fontaine, our Liberal Minister of Northern Development, a man who truly understood the needs of the north.

I think it's interesting to look back at some honourable members in terms of what they said at the time of

discussion back in those days. For example, I was shocked to look back upon the indignant comments of the then Nipissing MPP, Michael Harris, on the subject of the heritage fund back in 1988, because when it comes to political history on the economic needs of northern Ontario, this Tory government is clearly operating under one shameful philosophy, "That was then, this is now." Back then, Mr Harris was known to spew such memorable one-liners as, "This government is paying lip-service to the north." On the matter of the heritage fund, he was very concerned about the delay in getting the proceeds going. If this bill had been brought in and introduced before March 31, then the moneys could have been put to work for the north. Indeed, that was then, Mike Harris, this is now.

For 10 months, we've been waiting for news on the heritage fund. Since June of last year, we've been urging this government to move on introducing its version, any version, so we could debate it, of a newly outfitted heritage fund to benefit the people of our part of the province. "Let's get busy," we said. "Work to benefit the north." The word we got back, in August, September, November and January, was: "It's under review. We'll get back to you soon. It's under review. We can't make our minds up yet. It's under review."

Well, 10 months is simply 10 months too long for the people of northern Ontario, 10 months too long to wait for programs that we need to attain our economic goals and our community objectives. Eight years ago, Mike Harris said that an eight-month wait was too long for something this important, and despite this government's obvious penchant for moving quickly on other fronts—slash and burn, slash and burn—we've heard nothing on the fund; that is, until February of this year when suddenly \$60 million was missing from the northern Ontario heritage fund—\$60 million gone, vanished into thin air. Then it was revealed that the former government had siphoned off the \$60 million from the accrued worth of this fund and plunked it into the general revenue coffers.

The reaction of this government to that news was bizarre and phoney. Suddenly we had a perplexed Premier, an outraged finance minister, an evasive Minister of Northern Development, all of them tripping over themselves in shock when the truth about the funds was no further than page 9 of the 1994-95 annual report of the heritage fund. The minister had meekly accepted the \$60 million less and signed off on it.

1030

The resolution at hand is simply this: Return the \$60 million that is owed to northerners back to the heritage fund; renew the mandate so that it can be put to work for the north. But also the minister must consult with northerners. During the campaign, this government proudly spoke of the need for a greater voice for northern concerns, of an increased empowerment to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, making it a true lead ministry. Well, as this ministry threatens to slip into irrelevancy, this Minister of Northern Development and Mines has emerged as more leaden than leading.

As far as the heritage fund is concerned, I have reason to believe that this government has undertaken very little, if any, consultation. I've talked to many people in the

north—municipal leaders, economic development boards, all kinds of volunteers. I've asked: "Have you heard from the minister? Have you been included in any formal consultation to review and renew the heritage fund?" They've all said no.

We in the north have been patient, waiting for a clear signal from this government that it is truly committed to hearing what we have to say and to addressing our economic needs. Support of this resolution today by everybody might give us that first sign. Better late than never.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I am very pleased to participate in the debate this morning because it gives me the opportunity to expose the very empty rhetoric of both the Liberals and the Tories when it comes to concrete support of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp and concrete support of northern Ontario. The fact of the matter is that the Conservatives couldn't care less about job creation in northern Ontario, because this fund, the one single fund that, under legislation, has been specifically targeted for business development in northern Ontario, has been frozen since the Tories took government in June 1995. There has been not one single cent of money allocated to northern Ontario through this fund, and there has been no new job creation, no new job promotion in northern Ontario as a result. The minister should be here today to defend that, because he should be embarrassed about that situation.

Let me talk to you about the Liberal position now, because as it's put forward in this resolution, it clearly shows that the Liberals don't support business development and job creation in northern Ontario either. Instead of using this opportunity to slam the Tories for freezing the fund, as they have since June 1995, the Liberals come in here today and they support the contention that somehow the money is missing, because the resolution says that, and they also support the point that there should be a change in the mandate of the fund. I suspect, if they want to ally themselves with the Tories around the change of the fund, what you're going to see is a capital fund where line ministries offload all of their responsibilities on to NOHFC and we have no new money whatsoever to help business development. I say shame on the Liberals too for supporting that kind of position.

Let me start with the Liberals. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin conveniently neglected to mention that, as a consequence of the deal that was made, this fund was extended at least another three years in northern Ontario. If he doesn't support that, if he doesn't support the fact that the fund can be used for an additional three years beyond the mandate that his government set out, then he should get up and tell the people of northern Ontario just that. I say shame on you. That was a progressive, positive step by us to continue that funding. You should have been supporting that deal.

Secondly, to somehow defend the Harris contention that money disappeared from the fund is to defend the indefensible. How can you stand here, member for Algoma-Manitoulin, and defend the Premier's contention that the money was missing? All that shows is that neither the Premier, the minister nor you can read a financial statement. If you take a look at the financial statement, the annual report of the NOHFC, it clearly

says on page 7 that there was a repayment to the province in the order of \$60 million; "See accompanying notes to the financial statement." You go over to page 9 and you can tell that the deal is all listed there. That was signed by the minister, signed by the Provincial Auditor, signed by the general manager. You can't read a financial statement; that's your problem and his. The money is there. Nothing is missing, nothing is wrong, and as a consequence of the deal, we will have at least three extra years of funding for northern Ontario from this fund.

The resolution from the Liberals also indicates that they support an update in the mandate of NOHFC. As far as I'm concerned, that plays right into the hands of what the Tories want to do. We know from the press release that was issued by the Tories before the last election that they intend to significantly change the mandate of this fund. What they want to do is to create a capital fund for infrastructure. That is not the role of the NOHFC, that is not the role of the board of directors; that is the role of the direct line ministries that have a responsibility in northern Ontario, like the Ministry of Transportation, like the Ministry of Health, like the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Those responsibilities should not be offloaded on to NOHFC, and they are going to be. There's no doubt in my mind, when we see the new mandate, that that's exactly what the minister has in mind.

I think that's shameful, because now, more than ever before, northern business needs support, and it won't come from this government and it won't come from that kind of revised mandate. It's a real shame that that's the kind of thing the Liberals appear to have bought into.

I want to talk about the Tory position, because the minister should be here today. He should be here to explain to the people in northern Ontario why it is that as Minister of Northern Development, he has been in line with the Premier to freeze this funding since June 1995. We have had no new job creation in northern Ontario as a consequence. I want to compare that to what we did when we were in government and when I was minister.

During the time that I was Minister of Northern Development and chair of this board, we retained 7,000 jobs in northern Ontario and created 2,500 new ones during the course of our mandate. I am proud of that record, and I would compare that record against the record of this minister any day of the week. We assisted northern communities at a time when banks and other financial institutions didn't want to touch those companies because of the recession, and I am proud to say that in community after community we saved jobs and communities, because we used those funds to support northern business. That's the way it should be. That's the way it should continue to be.

This lack of support for NOHFC just reinforces where the Tories have been not only as the government but, frankly, as the opposition. I heard the parliamentary assistant try and say in here today that our government did nothing for the north. I want to remind him of what we did at Algoma Steel, what we did in Kapuskasing at Spruce Falls, what we did at Provincial Paper in Thunder Bay, what we did in Elliot Lake to diversify its economy. If we had left it to you, my friend, if you had been in government, those communities would have gone down

the toilet, all of the jobs, all of those people. Those communities would have been shut down under your government, so don't come in here and say to me today we did nothing. The fact that you got no new seats in northern Ontario in the face of a Tory sweep tells me that people in the north recognize who helped them. It was us, and that's why you folks, except for the two seats you already had, were completely and utterly shut out of northern Ontario.

Let me just talk a little bit about the missing fund fiasco, because that's all it is, and frankly it just demonstrates the incompetence of the Minister of Northern Development that such a story even came to light in the first place, because all it showed was that he couldn't read a financial statement, one that he in fact, as minister, had signed before the report went to publication. It also showed that the Premier of this province, as well, doesn't understand how to read a financial statement. I also believe as strongly as I can that in the very first meeting that the manager of the heritage corporation would have had with the minister, he would have very clearly and carefully explained to him that transaction, because that's the kind of capable manager he is. So either the minister didn't understand anything that was told to him or he was just as interested as Jeff Harder in the *Toronto Sun* in putting out the big lie, because that's all it is. It was a big lie, there was no story here, and it was really sad that the *Toronto Sun* would have run it in the first place. It was even more sad that the Premier would have called for some kind of silly investigation for money that wasn't even missing. It's been a ridiculous situation from start to finish, and both the Premier and the minister and, frankly, the *Toronto Sun* should be embarrassed by the whole thing, because you folks were a laughingstock in northern Ontario on this issue.

Just to reinforce it, in an interview that the general manager did with CBC, even the general manager of the fund said Premier Harris has asked northern development minister Chris Hodgson to look into the matter, but Kochanowski says Hodgson approved the fund's annual report last year, and it contains all of the details of the \$60-million deal.

It's very clear to me that what we're going to see when we see a new heritage fund corporation is one where all of the financial responsibilities and all of the responsibilities of the front-line ministries are going to be offloaded on to this corporation. As a minister who was in charge of this fund for four years and as a minister who was very proud to work with other northerners on that board to sustain and create jobs in northern Ontario, I think it is shameful that we are going to allow that to happen. We need to support northern business. They should be supported through this fund, and it's a bloody shame that that's not going to happen under these Tories in the next few months.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this resolution, which has obviously touched a nerve in the third party today.

While I've spent most of my life outside what is strictly defined as northern Ontario, I did have the opportunity to begin my working life in Kirkland Lake,

where I spent some time and learned a little bit about the region's economic challenges. I recognize that economic activity in the north is at a different level than it is in southern Ontario, and it's quite clear that opportunities for commerce in the north are limited. That's why I think we can agree the heritage fund provides a necessary opportunity base for northern development.

1040

My riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay is located just outside the border of what is defined as northern Ontario. However, programs in the north often have a significant impact on my constituents. Issues related to resource management, economic development, tourism marketing and health care—these are all areas which don't always obey arbitrary regional borders.

The northern Ontario heritage fund has been a significant factor in our northern Ontario development since its inception in 1988. I understand the concern that the member for Algoma-Manitoulin has with respect to the future of the fund and his frustration and outrage with the previous government's so-called management of the fund.

The mandate for the northern Ontario heritage fund is currently under a much-needed review. Previously, the mandate of the corporation was to provide assistance to single-industry communities experiencing economic disruptions and to assist the development and adoption of new technologies. The fund was set up to support special projects designed to diversify and strengthen the economic base of northern Ontario and help small businesses get started, expand, modernize or diversify.

Just over a year ago, the previous government took \$60 million from the corporation and placed it in the consolidated revenue fund. This act may have, at least in the minds of the previous cabinet, made the provincial ledger appear a little more presentable, but I fail to see what this fiddling with ministry accounts did to promote economic development in the north.

As promised during the election, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp is now being refocused. The minister has said that in the near future he'll announce new program and eligibility criteria for the corporation. It's time the focus of the funds mandate is shifted so that money is no longer earmarked on grants and loans for individual businesses. Northerners agree the fund should instead centre its efforts towards infrastructure and development opportunities. I have a special interest in tourism issues and I can see many ways the fund could benefit the northern Ontario tourism industry if it followed an approach that fostered sector-wide development.

Northerners also want a greater say on who's appointed to the board. By providing greater say for those most directly affected by the fund, there will be no repeat of the sad performance which occurred in the previous government's last-minute election panic.

As indicated by my colleague from Grey-Owen Sound, finding the money to top the fund up is going to be tough. But I'm confident that with the completion of the minister's review, northerners will see a fund which has addressed their many concerns, a fund which promotes economic development of northern communities and a fund which listens to those northerners who are most affected.

While I understand the concern which led to the introduction of this resolution, I think it's critical to wait for the minister's announcement and to let him, as the chairman of the heritage fund, take responsibility for the fund's future.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Let me first start off by clarifying the record just a little bit. First of all, with regard to the member for Sudbury East, she not only reads financial statements creatively, but she also reads election results creatively. The Liberals had a net gain of two seats in the north.

The member for Nickel Belt states that the money is in the northern Ontario heritage fund. The member for Grey-Owen Sound says the money isn't in the heritage fund. It's amazing. There must be an IOU somewhere around here. We read the press clippings: "Ontario Coffers Missing \$100 Million." "Heritage Fund Cookie Jar Isn't Empty After All."

Listen, this reminds me of Bud Abbott being the government and Lou Costello being the third party in the skit "Who's on First?" Who's on first? I don't care. Who's on second? What? I don't care. I know one thing. The Liberals are on third. We don't know. We don't know what happened to the money. We don't know why the money isn't back in the fund. We don't know why the government isn't putting the money back into the fund. We don't know why the interest isn't being put back into the fund, along with the original \$60 million.

All we know is that when we get to home base, which is northern Ontario, we want the \$60 million back in the fund, plus interest, so that we can go back to the people of northern Ontario and say, "People of northern Ontario, all three parties acted in good faith and we're going to fulfil the mandate of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act instituted by the Liberals which states the objects of the corporation are to advise and make recommendations to the Lieutenant Governor in Council on any matter relating to the growth and diversification of the economy of northern Ontario, to promote and stimulate economic initiatives in northern Ontario and see the commission studies and enters into contracts in connection with the objects as set out in articles A and B." In other words, when we get to home base, which is northern Ontario, we want the money intact to be used by the people of northern Ontario to improve northern Ontario. We don't care where it went, where it is now; we want it back.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to make a few comments with respect to the resolution from the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. There obviously is some debate as to whether there was \$60 million taken out or whether there was more money taken out. The former Treasurer stands up and says it's all there, you know, it really didn't disappear. The member for Manitoulin says it's gone. Jeff Harder says it's gone. I must confess, I quite frankly would accept the position of the member for Algoma-Manitoulin; I think that money's gone. So I understand his resolution. I see the member for Cochrane South is here today. I spent some time in Timmins earlier this year and there's no question that the area in northern Ontario needs to be treated a little differently and needs extra funding to simply survive in many other areas.

Surely you're not asking our government to be responsible for the errors of the former New Democratic government. They have spent, I heard, \$100 million at one point. Whether it's \$60 million or whether it's \$100 million—I understand that. Here we are, trying to restructure. We've got a big problem in this province, whether you acknowledge it or not. We've got a spending problem. We've got a revenue problem. Money is just not going to come out of the air.

So your resolution—I understand the intent of it and I think everyone in this House will agree with the intent that northern Ontario needs special attention. The question is, where's the money going to come from. These people spent it, notwithstanding what the Treasurer says. And one of the other members stood up with some report that talks about it's really there. I quite agree with you; I think it's gone. They spent it. In the middle of the night they came in and they thought they could get away with it, and they didn't get away with it, fortunately for people like you and Mr Harder and others.

There's no question it's gone, and I guess where I do have difficulties supporting your resolution is where the money's going to come from. Your resolution says, "therefore, the government of Ontario should return the funds"—because they're gone, they're spent—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired.

Mr Tilson: I'm speaking against the resolution, Mr Speaker.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I congratulate my colleague for bringing this most important issue to the forefront here in the Legislature this morning. We've heard many things here this morning. We hear from the NDP, who claim that it was not wrong for them to take that \$60 million out of the fund in order to reduce their deficit and, again, in the darkness of the night, as we've heard, without telling the people of the north, without consulting with the people of the north, \$60 million just happens to drift off into the consolidated revenue fund.

We've heard from the member for Dufferin-Peel who talks about the uniqueness of the north and, yes, there are many uniquenesses in the north. We've heard from other Conservative members, the Conservative economic development minister, who branded this move as politically dishonest. He too agrees that there is a problem, there is uniqueness in the north that deserves this fund. We've heard about how the fund does come back into the north. It comes back into the north to actually realize the royalties that are taken out of the north, the royalties on forestry, on mining. This is money that is used in the north, that is taken out of the north to help us develop our road system, our economic development, our health care. Another former speaker just indicated tourism, how this money is important to us in tourism.

1050

We have members from all three parties acknowledging the uniqueness and the need for this fund. All I'm suggesting is that we ensure that the fund is there for northerners to use, and to hear that the money is not there is kind of astonishing.

We've heard the parliamentary assistant as he refers to updating the plan. The plan needs redirection, the fund

needs redirection. But I cannot emphasize enough that the plan redirection, the northern Ontario heritage fund, needs the money. Without the money there for northerners, it will not be a plan for redirection, it will not need redirection. We need that money back into the fund for northerners to decide to do some unique things with the fund.

As I indicated, we've heard nothing, very little, from this government in terms of what it is going to do, in terms of what redirection it is planning on. What are the plans? We have a parliamentary assistant who travels the north, and we hear nothing back. We hear nothing in terms of his consultations with the people who are going to be putting that fund to use, the people who are going to ensure that those dollars are redirected to observe, again, the unique circumstances that we face in the north and that the fund was initially established to address.

I must stress to the parliamentary assistant—unfortunately the minister is not here today to partake in this debate—but I must stress the importance to the parliamentary assistant that he takes the message back to the minister that this is a fund set up for these uniquenesses and a fund that must be directed by northerners to ensure that it is put to proper use in the north.

I cannot see why all three parties would not want to support this most important fund, a fund that we've seen used throughout northern Ontario for the past many years since it has been established and a fund that really is put to good use in northern Ontario to address the uniqueness.

Again I congratulate the member, my colleague, for bringing this again to the forefront in the House today to allow people to discuss what happened to the money, whether it disappeared, it went here, it went there. But the most important thing is that it must be put back into the place where it is deserved and most needed, into the northern Ontario heritage fund.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): The first thing I would like to do this morning is to congratulate the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, my colleague Mike Brown. I'm very proud to be able to stand in my place and speak in support of this, and I'm very pleased that the member brought this to the attention of the House through private members' hour.

I want to tell you quite frankly that I have a lot of respect for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. He's a good person, and I have worked on several committees with him. But I'll tell you what the difference is in not being a northerner and living in the north: You don't really understand the depth of feeling that northerners have for a fund such as the heritage fund and where it comes from.

Where it comes from, quite frankly, is that northerners over the years have felt exploited through resource extraction and that many times, through mining for instance, you actually are left with holes in the ground in our communities. We physically can see the resources being taken out of the ground and taken down to the affluent areas of southern Ontario where wealth is generated, and basically, literally in many cases, a hole is left in the ground.

Most parties in this House and most northern members believed there needed to be some redress to this. We

came together back in the 1980s and felt that a northern development heritage fund would be the way to redress this grievance that northerners have had.

To find out that the previous government had taken that money out from the dedicated fund—because it was important to northerners that the fund be dedicated, that we did get a share of the resource revenue that was generated from resource extraction, totally dedicated to northern Ontario—for that to be taken away is offensive to northerners. That's why the member for Algoma-Manitoulin has brought this resolution before the House today: to implore this government to put the money back.

In his speech, one of the members from the government side had asked, "Well, where are we going to find the money to put it back?" The money is there. The money has been generated from the extraction of resources in northern Ontario. It has been generated. As the member says in his resolution, this is only a small proportion, a small share, of the resource extraction revenue that has come from northern Ontario. We're asking the government to put it back, to do the right thing, so that northern Ontarians have their heritage fund back, a fund that we can manage, that we can use to help to stimulate the economy, to stimulate business and jobs in northern Ontario. We see it as our birthright and we're really afraid that now that this fund has been absconded with and put down into general revenues, we're never going to see it again.

So I ask the parliamentary assistant who's here, and through him to the minister who's not today, to put that money back for northern Ontarians. It is our heritage, it is our birthright, and we need it in the north.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes.

Mr Michael Brown: I appreciate the comments of members that have been made this morning. I find some of the comments, though, a little bit interesting. The member for Sudbury East, for example, said I had some problem reading financial statements. I want to quote to you what the heritage fund annual report says. It says, "As part of refinancing arrangements approved by treasury board of cabinet, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the corporation, the corporation repaid \$60 million to the Minister of Finance on March 31, 1995." I don't know what you think that means. I know what I think that means, and what that means is that the heritage fund had \$60 million taken out of its trust account and paid into general consolidated revenues in the province of Ontario and will never be seen by northerners again.

It is a pure and simple fact that it was done by New Democrats. I heard Mr Murdoch, the parliamentary assistant, say the money was stolen. His government is in possession of the stolen dollars. In any court in the country, someone who's in possession of stolen goods is guilty. The money should go back.

I agree, as all northerners agree, we have a financial problem in this province, but we are somewhat surprised that we are expected to pay more than our share towards that deficit difficulty. We are most concerned that we are being asked to make a sacrifice above and beyond any group, any region in the province of Ontario. We are not

asking for anything more than, as Mr Ramsay so aptly put it, our birthright, our legacy to be returned to us.

The member for Nickel Belt, Mr Laughren, said you can't spend more than \$30 million a year in the heritage fund; it's not allowed. He's wrong. It only receives \$30 million from revenues a year, but you can spend what you need to in any given year, and that was the beauty of the whole plan. It is as if the New Democrats chose not to put—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Michael Brown: I had about three minutes—

Mr Michlash: The Speaker agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm informed that the member cannot use any of that time; he can only use the time that is assigned to your caucus and to him as speaker.

Mr Michlash: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The previous Speaker who was in the chair agreed with the member when the member asked to have the remainder of his time allocated to the end of the debate. The Speaker agreed at that time. He agreed.

Mr Murdoch: On a point of order: We did agree with that and he does have the time. That's what we did agree to. I agree with that. He gets his time.

The Deputy Speaker: The Speaker has no authority to make that, but this House does. If we have unanimous consent of the House, then we could. Is it agreed? Two minutes? It's agreed.

1100

Mr Michael Brown: As I was saying, it appears to us that an amount which the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, in 1988, believed to be woefully inadequate—\$30 million a year was not going to be adequate. That was the major argument against the northern Ontario heritage fund. And what did we have? If you net this out, we've actually had the New Democratic government not contribute for two of those years, if that's the way you want to look at it.

What I'm saying is, this should not be a terribly partisan issue. This is about northerners, it's about our economic climate, it's about our roads, it's about our social structures, it's about health care, it's about those things that northerners may choose to make their own particular priorities. All we're saying to the government is, look, you've got a revenue stream of, I don't know, \$40 billion, maybe \$45 billion a year. Maybe out of that \$45 billion, or whatever it is that is the exact number that flows into the provincial treasury, put back the money that the previous government stole. Otherwise you're complicit. Otherwise, you, the Conservative government, are just as guilty as the former government. Do the right thing.

I would expect that all members of this House can support such a reasonable representation that I'm making this morning, and my Liberal colleagues are. For the good of northern Ontario, for our legacy and for our birthright, I urge you to support this resolution.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair would like to bring to the attention of the House, in the west members' gallery, Mr Mark Morrow, former member for Wentworth East.

CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARDS

Mr Marchese moved private member's notice of motion number 11:

That in the opinion of this House, since it is in the public interest that public utilities and banks be more accountable to the citizens, ratepayers and consumers they serve; and that cutbacks in government funding are forcing non-governmental consumer organizations and government ministries alike to make drastic reductions in their watchdog and consumer support activities, with detrimental effects on accountability; and since some of Ontario's public utilities may be privatized, making the need to ensure accountability all the greater; and that citizens' utility boards can be established that would further the goals of public input and involvement and be operated without public funds or additional regulation; and that public utilities can be required to facilitate the operation of citizens' utility boards without adding to their own costs of doing business; therefore (a) the government of Ontario should move promptly to introduce legislation creating citizens' utility boards and requiring public utilities to facilitate their operation; and (b) the government of Ontario should urge the federal government to take similar action with respect to banks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Fort York has 10 minutes.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm very happy to be here today to speak to this motion. I will ask that the audience who is watching excuse my sore throat. I have a virus. I hope I didn't catch it in here; I'm sure I must have caught it outside. But it was an important resolution for me and I wanted to be here to speak to it.

This resolution is a new idea to strengthen consumer advocacy. That's the substance of this resolution. Before I get into some of the arguments around it, I want to give some brief background as to what a citizens' utility board is all about.

I should point out that citizens' utility boards are in existence in the United States. They are non-profit, arm's-length, state-wide organizations of residential utility ratepayers in four American states.

What do they do? What does a CUB, a citizens' utility board, do? It advocates for fair electric, gas and water rates and sensible energy policies before the utility regulatory boards or before a state Legislature. CUBs are made up of voluntary, dues-paying members and they enjoy enormous popularity in the states in which they exist. In Illinois alone, it is reported that the citizens' utility board members have saved ratepayers \$2 billion since 1983. It's a remarkable figure. What it speaks to is the power of citizens and consumers to effect change that in this particular instance is not hurtful to the general public.

CUBs work as follows: Customers of public utilities will receive a CUB-funded insert with their utility bills four times a year. The insert allows the citizens' utility board to reach out to consumers and ask them to join the citizens' utility board. Membership dues and donations, not government financial support, enable the association to have resources to hire economists, experts, organizers and attorneys to represent consumers. They are non-

profit. They're run democratically by the membership through an elected board of directors.

In my view, this is the way we can grow democracy. This is a tool the government can give to consumers to control utility rates, unfair practices and deal with the lobbyists of those various utilities, having the membership, the dues, the democratic structure to hire those people to be able to represent them in such a way that the interest of the public is protected.

If the government cares about tools, and Lord knows it has given enough tools to municipalities to raise taxes, if it wants to give yet another tool to consumers which wouldn't cost the government a penny, wouldn't cost municipal governments a penny, it would allow the establishment of citizens' utility boards, thereby giving them real democratic tools to be able to tackle the problems of a utility. This is how we can help to democratize institutions and to institutionalize a practice where consumers are empowered to take on a utility.

Such questions as these: Do you have any clout at all when utility rates are increased? If your answer is no, we have a problem and it speaks to the need for a strong consumer association. Do you think you can do anything if utilities waste your money or operate inefficiently? If your answer is no, this is a tool that can give you power as a citizen to tackle such questions. Here's another one: Do you have a voice at the Legislature to speak out against utility lobbyists? If your answer is no, as I believe it is likely to be, then you are the person out there who is looking for a citizens' utility board to be established.

Democracy is a relative term and it can grow or diminish depending on the actions of citizens and governments. If we as a government are interested in growing democracy and giving greater independence to the public, and diminishing the dependence of the public, if we're interested in that, then this government has through this citizens' utility board the potential to create something that allows them to be able to deal with the utility boards in a way that sometimes governments have not been able to do properly.

We have a tendency in Canada to create mammoth public agencies which seem out of keeping with the relatively small size of our province, sometimes our country, relative to other countries that are much larger, vis-à-vis the US. Given this fact, I believe it's the job of governments to balance the scales by providing citizens with more direct power.

1110

It is a citizen watchdog for public utilities such as hydro, water, gas, the banks at the federal level, could be auto insurance—you could add anything you deem it important to have. A citizens' utility board would be a departure from the old-fashioned Canadian tradition of setting up a government agency or an ombudsman. We have done that often, and often members of this assembly have decried the number of agencies we have and the number of things such as ombudsmen's offices. The point of the citizens' utility boards is that they do not require public money to operate, they do not require more government regulation of utilities and they are not even a government body.

It should be appealing to all of us irrespective of our political tendencies. It is something I think should appeal to the government in particular, because it's a government that says: "We're creating a more efficient workplace around here. We're getting rid of waste." Although they don't say it publicly, and publicly they vacillate on the issue of privatization, privately I suspect they're salivating at the idea of privatization. If you privatize such an institution as Ontario Hydro, then I argue there's much more of a need to create a citizens' utility board that would become the watchdog of these utilities. It would watch the operations of that utility, the waste, the inefficiencies and the lobbyists of such operations in a way that balances the power to citizens, to consumers, to your taxpayers.

The government's role is simply to help to establish CUBs and after that they're on their own. The only thing that is required is for the government to pass a law or a regulation that would establish these citizens' utility boards. What may also be needed is for the government perhaps to pay for the first mailing it would do, but subsequently CUBs would insert in those mailings done by the utilities an insert that speaks about what a citizens' utility board is, urging people to join such a utility board for \$5 or \$10, whatever it is.

For example, if only 2% of Ontario Hydro consumers replied to such a mailing, Ontario would have an instant public utility consumer watchdog with a staggering 200,000 members. Imagine the power, imagine how we grow democracy and the power it gives to citizens if we do this.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you very much for the opportunity to be able to respond to this resolution. I certainly compliment the member for Fort York in the delivery, under trying circumstances, but the content had a lot to be desired.

This resolution is to create a citizens' utility board. Already we have an acronym, CUBs. Frankly, I'm disappointed that we're going to be spending an hour debating this particular issue. As I read the resolution it certainly was not clear to me what we were going to be debating and the direction it was going to go in. Were we talking about public utility commissions in local communities, or were we going to be talking about provincial utilities such as Ontario Hydro, gas, water etc? Certainly, the member for Fort York helped to explain that here this morning.

He referred to it as a non-profit organization at arm's length and already operating in four states. Repeatedly, the NDP has been all upset about anything that comes from the US, and I'm surprised they would identify that their ideas are coming from the United States of America. They mention it being a non-profit organization. Well, I can tell you, we've run into a lot of non-profit organizations that have been extremely profitable to some sectors, and really non-profit organizations have not been all that successful.

We talk about tools for the consumers. If it's such a marvellous idea, I'm left wondering why, when they had almost five years, they wouldn't have brought in one of these tools that's so marvellous. The last year in govern-

ment, they literally brought nothing into the House. They only sat for some 22 days, and all I can assume is that it was not acceptable to the NDP caucus of the day, and so they're trying to bring it forward at this point in time.

It appeared to me on reading the resolution that it was going to be a watchdog organization, and in fact this is what the member for Fort York has explained to us, that it is in fact a watchdog organization. But I'm left wondering if he doesn't trust the public utility commissions in his community. I certainly trust the ones in ours. Maybe he doesn't trust Ontario Hydro and maybe there's good reason there with some of the things that have been happening, particularly during the last five years.

It would appear to me what this member is trying to do is to bring in another layer of bureaucracy and certainly that is in fact a trademark of an NDP government, and I would recommend to all members of the House to vote against this particular resolution.

As I look at all the whereases in this resolution, the first one starts off: Whereas "it is in the public interest that public utilities and banks be more accountable to the citizens, ratepayers and consumers they serve."

First, as the member knows, banks are a federal responsibility so we can drop that one, and then we move on to public utilities. The public utility commissions that I'm familiar with are served by elected members or appointed by elected bodies, and I ask you, how can you improve on accountability any more than having people elected to serve in those particular roles?

Maybe he's referring more at the provincial level and, yes, I can respect some of the concerns he has there, but is he also suggesting that maybe we should create citizens' utility or citizen watchdog groups for municipal governments, for provincial governments, for federal governments, for hospital boards, for school boards? It does seem rather redundant, especially when you start wondering how they would be created. Would they be elected? Another approach.

The people that are watching are already elected and that is certainly accountable enough, so why should we have watchdogs watching watchdogs watching watchdogs? It's just quasi-court being laid one on top of another.

Would they be appointed? We heard yesterday from one of the would-be leaders of your party, really upset over how appointments are being made, and then it was demonstrated to the NDP how you went about making appointments, and that certainly does not seem to be a satisfactory way of creating them.

How many would serve on these boards? There's just so many questions about how these boards would operate. Remember that we already have all kinds of voluntary boards that do in fact monitor various elected groups and utilities, such as ratepayers, for example, and I'm sure you're familiar. In my area we have the Hamilton ratepayers and they just do an excellent job. They get 100 out to their monthly meetings and they monitor and work with, not against work with, the elected people.

What level of power would you give to this group? Would you give veto power to the others? These are questions that have to be understood before you start bringing forth a resolution such as that.

Then we move on to the second whereas: Whereas "cutbacks in government funding are forcing non-governmental consumer organizations and government ministries alike to make drastic reductions in their watchdog and consumer support activities, with detrimental effects on accountability."

How are the cutbacks on non-governmental organizations going to have an effect? They're out there doing their thing. Are they going to always depend on government money to function? If they do, then they have a built-in bias. They're going to operate on their own.

If money was the answer to making things accountable, then we would have absolutely a marvellous province to live in today with the amount of money that's been thrown at things in the last 10 years. We'd have, I think, an absolutely perfect province. Obviously, that is not where we're at. The province of Ontario, as has been said many times, is a great place to live, but it certainly has not been a great place to do business recently. But in the next four years, I can assure you, it will be a great place to do business.

1120

Move on to the third whereas: Whereas "some of Ontario's public utilities may be privatized"—oh my dear, that's terrible—"making the need to ensure accountability all the greater." I would suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that privatization would increase the accountability of utilities. We would have municipalities monitoring what public utilities would be carrying out.

I expect you've introduced this resolution so you can try and beat up on our present government over thinking about looking at examining the possibility of privatization. I would suggest to the member that it's not all about public versus private; what it's about is, do we have a pure monopoly or do we bring some competition into a monopoly? I can assure you that competition in any area is healthy. If you don't think it's a healthy thing to have, then why would we have a third party competing in the province of Ontario if they don't believe in competition? They're basic groups. To compete politically means they do support competition, so I have a little trouble with why they're opposed to privatization.

We're so concerned about privatization that maybe you support that 649 people should make over \$100,000 in Ontario Hydro. Do you support that fact that industrial rates in Ontario are 5.42 cents per kilowatt while in Manitoba it's 2.97, half the price? Where would an industry go, to Ontario or to Manitoba? The Ford plants in Ontario, in the US and in Mexico, having plants in 17 different areas, up until 1986 had the lowest-price power in the province in Ontario. Now they're down to 12th out of 17. That's where monopoly has taken us.

We have all kinds of protection organizations, from ratepayer groups, Consumers' Association of Canada, and Pollution Probe that looks after environmental issues. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that this resolution is inconsistent with our government policy. We believe in increased local autonomy. We don't, as a provincial government, want to be micromanaging the local level. We believe in reduced bureaucracy, if you're looking at a watchdog level, for the provincial utilities level. We certainly believe in less red tape and getting rid of the useless

regulations, particularly the large numbers that have come in in the last 10 years. We believe in reducing costs significantly. Government must increase efficiency and must become more effective. I can assure you that over the next four years that indeed will happen.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Before I give a few thoughts with regard to this motion, I want to thank the member for Fort York for obviously thinking out a very, very complex issue. When we look at CUBs, we find out that they're really not very new. Although they're not as structured as the member for Fort York would like, they are in existence in many of the ways that the previous speaker spoke about. Let me just outline from a very, very parochial perspective with regard to this motion.

Although it's complex and although I think it's very unusual when you get a right-wing idea coming from the left-wing party, we all have trouble with this and we all have trouble comprehending. In fact, is there an underlying reason for the motion?

It doesn't really bother me that somebody from the left would have a right-wing idea, because if you look at the way Ontario is going, I'm fearful that the move to the extreme right, is starting to catch on. It's certainly not catching on with the party in the middle, the party that tries to find balance, the party that tries to find fairness, the party that tries to find justice in both sides of the House, the government's right-wing approach and of course the third party's left-wing antics and ideas.

But let me tell you, I think this is quite simple. I think the CUB idea is simply what we already have in existence: community action groups. You know what? The best things happen when the public is motivated to make things happen. You don't have to legislate that. You don't have to mandate that. You don't have to encourage that. Let me give you some concrete ideas, because I think community action groups are a way of the future, a way of ensuring that maximum human resource potential is brought to its highest peak.

Let me talk to you for a moment about Sudbury, our acquisition of the MRI at the Sudbury General Hospital. The government might like to take credit for it, but had it not been for Sandra Gardolfo and the group that she put together, the MRI would not have happened. It was a community action group motivated because of a tragedy.

Let me talk to you about the northeastern cancer research centre for a second. Had it not been for Gerry Lougheed and the group put together who saw the need for people from the north to be serviced in the north when they had that dreaded disease, the cancer centre wouldn't have happened. It wasn't because of governments, regardless of whether they were Progressive Conservative, Liberal or New Democrat; it was because a group saw a need, an individual had a dream. That happened because the community was motivated.

We look at Science North, now a provincial institution. Certainly, it wouldn't have come about unless we had the dreamers to make it happen, the community to see we need to have a world-class science centre in the north. It happened because the community was motivated.

The Sudbury Theatre Centre, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary, thanks to the Nurmi family, thanks to

Dr Masserolla, wouldn't have happened unless there was a dream, the community action group got together and they made it happen.

It goes on and on. We have Fringe Nord, Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario, Cinefest. They all happened because people have an idea, people have a dream, the community comes together and we make it happen. I think underlying the CUB concept, if I understand it correctly—and I agree with the previous speaker: It is certainly cumbersome in nature. What I'm understanding is that the member for Fort York wants people to get involved. You know, it's happening here. I look at the member for Oakwood and I think he was asking community action groups to come together, to ensure that they inform the Minister of Transportation about the pothole problem across the province. So he is the visionary. The member for Oakwood has the dream. He wants the community from all over Ontario to come together, and let's find out just how many potholes there are and how severe the problem is.

Mr Speaker, I know, I'm taking a little bit of licence here and I apologize. I will come back to reality to tell you that I can't support the motion because I believe by and large it's already in existence and it's working well: Science North, MRI at the general hospital. There are all kinds of examples, not only in Sudbury, not only in the region of Sudbury, but all over Ontario. I encourage those people, if they firmly believe that a person has a good idea, to get involved in a community action project, become involved. The underlying tone of the motion, I'm sure, is simply that: He wants people, he wants average citizens, much like the member for Oakwood wants, to get involved and let the government know its shortcomings and how it can improve.

1130

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Any further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): There most certainly is, Speaker, and I'm pleased to comment on what is a very innovative and unique and most appropriate proposition here.

I want to as well recognize that among our visitors today are Tammy Stowe and Jennifer Wilkinson, both students at Orchard Park Secondary School in Stoney Creek who are going to be spending the day here at Queen's Park scrutinizing what it is that this Legislative Assembly does.

I want to express some real gratitude to Rosario Marchese, the member for Fort York, for bringing this matter forward. Again, this isn't unexpected from Mr Marchese. He has been an advocate not only for the residents of Fort York throughout his years here at Queen's Park, but has as well embraced the broader perspective. He's accomplished what very few parliamentarians have been able to do, and that is to be a strong, effective voice for the people in his constituency, but at the same time perform an effective role in the Legislature dealing with broader provincial issues.

One has to refer specifically to the resolution and recognize that nobody's calling upon the government to legislate the creation of CUBs. Take a look closely. I'm concerned that other members in having commented on this haven't recognized what's the viscera, the guts of

this resolution, and that is requiring public utilities to facilitate their operation. That's really what's it's all about: requiring public utilities to facilitate their operation.

Some of the people commenting on this resolution have made reference to local public utilities. Please, look what we're talking about here and let's understand one thing: that we have a number of regulatory bodies here in the province of Ontario, and in this country, regulatory bodies which primarily are designed to respond to the very specific and unique roles that monopolies have, or quasi-monopolies.

Federally, take a look when we talk about the rate-setting for cable television. Look at the uproar that ensued here in the province in response to some recent changes in rate-setting and recognize that there was no effective way for consumers to have participated in the regulatory decision-making such that consumers' interests could be represented. Oh, I know we have a Consumers' Association of Canada, which sadly has been to the largest extent not only bankrupt financially but bankrupt in terms of ideas. If it regards itself as a watchdog, and I'm sure it would want to, it has been a somewhat—it's like my old beagle Charlie: rather slow, toothless and not quite as eager as Charlie was in his youth to bark when strangers approached.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): I'll pass that comment on to Helen Anderson.

Mr Kormos: I certainly hope that comment is passed on.

What we have here is a response to a vacuum in this province and in this country. Look, we haven't had a strong tradition, as has the United States, and no doubt not only in no small part but due very specifically to the leadership of Ralph Nader in the consumer protection/consumer advocacy movement, and before him there were people like Saul Alinsky, who very much matured through the process of community organization into some very specific consumer advocacy in designing techniques, means, whereby consumers could have their voice heard.

In Canada we're blessed with Duff Conacher, who provides leadership for an organization called Democracy Watch, Duff Conacher, an acolyte of Ralph Nader and the Nader movement in the United States, having been one of Nader's Raiders. But there's an imperative that there be an opportunity for the consumer to participate in the regulatory process.

The Ontario Insurance Commission, where approval is acquired by the private sector, profiteering auto insurance industry, which has always had short arms and deep pockets and doesn't hesitate not only to rob from premium-payers, but to also beat up on the victims, the innocent victims of motor vehicle accidents: Who is there to advocate for the consumer when the Ontario Insurance Commission is called upon to approve the premiums set by the auto insurance industry? There's a vacuum.

Who is there to advocate for the consumer when the cable television industry—increasingly becoming a monopoly, one can say; if not a monopoly, surely a quasi-monopoly—who's there to advocate for the consumers? Who's there to advocate for the consumers when Bell telephone rates are being set? Because Bell telephone—

again, a corporation whose motive is to make as much money as it can at the expense of people—fails to recognize that that sort of telecommunications is imperative. Do I believe that telecommunications should be within the public sector? You bet your boots I do. But until it is, it's imperative that Bell telephone, regulated as it is, and regulated because it is a monopoly, it's imperative that there be consumer participation.

Without that—as a matter of fact, one must refer to the learned article in one of the University of Toronto law reviews which pointed out very clearly that regulatory bodies—this is a pattern—almost inevitably tend to be co-opted by the industry that they purport to regulate. The author of that University of Toronto Law Review article was none other than Ian Scott, former Attorney General, whose acumen in this regard cannot be disputed.

We're blessed with class actions, because that's one vehicle—and again, recognizing that the concept of class action in this jurisdiction was initiated by Ian Scott, but certainly under the leadership of Howard Hampton, the Attorney General for the last government, acquired the mechanism and meanings whereby class actions can become effective. We don't have a strong products liability litigation movement in this jurisdiction or in the country, in contrast to the United States. There's been a persistent attack on tort, first by the Liberal government. The last government certainly didn't help, and this government is carrying on in its attack on tort and the remedies that provides for consumers.

What this resolution proposes is simply this, and it's within the provincial jurisdiction to require this even of federally regulated industries like Bell telephone, like cable communications: that those industries in their billing process facilitate the creation of CUBs so that people can choose voluntarily, democratically, to join or not to join. A mere nickel, dime, quarter apiece could fund the effective watchdogging that's essential with the sort of regulatory boards I've spoken to.

The support of this resolution is essential if we're ever going to acquire democracy for consumers in this province, if we're ever going to acquire a meaningful advocacy for consumers at the regulatory level.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to make a few comments with respect to the recommendations made by the member for Fort York. I always admire the member for Fort York. I believe he always believes what he says. I know he works hard. For example, his staff sent me a package of what he's trying to put forward. I know he's been working on it for a couple of years, so that he's researched it well. I've spoken to him privately and he may not believe that I still understand, but I can tell you that I appreciate his dedication, the very fact that he's here today. I know he's not well, but he has come to put forward something that he truly believes in.

My belief is that this resolution is in fact creating something we already have. I know the member for Fort York will say, "Well, this group"—which works, as I understand it, in four states, from the material that I was sent; I could be corrected—is "citizen-run and -financed, democratically elected." I'm reading from the press release the member for Fort York had released. The problem is that we already have, as the member for

Northumberland said, public utilities commissions. I have two in my riding, very hardworking individuals who are elected and do whatever they can to make sure those utilities are being run properly.

1140

With due respect to the member for Fort York, it's typical of an NDP position. The NDP loves to have commissions. The favourite debate my friend from Fort York and I have had is on the Advocacy Commission, and they had the Employment Equity Commission, the Environmental Bill of Rights commission, we had the wonderful IWA, which was trying to create superdumps around the southern part of the province, and we even had a commission on alleged race riots with respect to Yonge Street a couple of years ago, all of which costs a great deal of money.

I think that's the fear, that when you put forward something like this—we all support ratepayers' groups, but the difficulty is when you start to put forward these groups with suggested government funding. The member will stand up in reply and say, "But there's not going to be any government funding." Well, I've seen these groups sponsored by government, whether it be non-profit corporations or not-for-profit organizations. Somehow—and it's happened in their government and it's happened in the Liberal government—these corporations, these creations, end up costing the taxpayers thousands of dollars. That's the reluctance I have to support this resolution.

We have very good ratepayers' groups. We all can talk about the ratepayers' groups we have in our respective ridings, whether they're fighting against gravel pits or whether they're fighting against dumps or whether they're fighting against high taxes or whether they're fighting against high energy rates or whether they're fighting against actions being taken by government—very informed people. I'll tell you, if you take on one of these ratepayer groups, you'd better know what you're doing and what you're talking about or you're going to be in very deep trouble. Those actions by those ratepayers' groups, those citizens' groups, don't cost the government of Ontario a nickel. They don't cost us anything. In fact, they have an effect on how we think.

Our whole philosophy on this side of the House is that we've got too many politicians in this province, too many regulations, and that's what we're cutting back on. The member for Fort York will say, "You still don't understand my resolution," but in my view this resolution is creating more politicians, because he's suggesting that they be elected; at least that's a consideration. He's creating more levels of red tape. We simply have a great deal of concern.

The biggest thing is the issue of cost. The taxpayers can't sustain any more cost in this province with respect to these issues.

Although I admire the member, as usual, for his beliefs and his tenacity in putting forward his resolutions, I believe we're well looked after by the ratepayers' groups of this province, the elected groups of the public utilities commissions. In my riding, I have one public utilities commission in Orangeville and another in Caledon, both of which do a very good job with respect to making sure

there's proper service with respect to energy in our riding.

I will not be supporting the resolution because I think it's another level of bureaucracy and another cost that we simply cannot sustain.

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): I haven't made up my mind yet whether I should support this resolution and I would like to ask a few questions of the member who introduced the resolution.

We're all concerned about privatization. Even some members from the government have asked questions of certain ministers in the House concerning privatization because of the concern about how these private companies will provide the services the government was providing before, and at what cost, and will the government be a loser or a winner? I realize the present government is trying to cut back on funding to private utility service agencies.

I ask the member, in creating these citizens' utility boards, what power will these people have? If it's a simple committee of ratepayers or citizens in place to simply take a look at what privatization has done—he's asking for more accountability, and if the member is really looking for more accountability, the utility boards must have power. Are we creating another Ombudsman in the province? We all know what that office is costing us. I simply ask the member to please tell me what these people will have in place, what tools they will have, to make these companies more accountable.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le Président. Comme d'habitude, votre distinction dans le siège est très aimable. J'ai besoin de faire ça pour mes provocations d'un peu plus de bonheur.

I'd like to speak in favour of the motion that's been brought forward today by my colleague. I believe it is going to become more important than ever to make sure we have the mechanisms in place to have watchdogs out there to take a look at the question of public utilities. This is important more than ever, I would say, because of the agenda of this government and its aim to privatize Ontario Hydro. I can't resist the opportunity to put on the record a couple of things in regard to that. The first thing we have to ask ourselves is, if Ontario Hydro is privatized, who in the end is going to benefit? Will the consumers benefit?

A lot of people don't realize it, but in Ontario we have a system of rural rate subsidy so that no matter where you live in the province, areas of high-density population are subsidizing those areas where it's more difficult to bring hydro in. If you allowed the market to dictate the price of hydro, the price would be quite a bit higher. For example, in northern Ontario we benefit from that policy. I fear that if Hydro is privatized, we're going to end up in a situation where areas such as Metropolitan Toronto which have high-density urban populations would get a good hydro rate but people in rural Ontario and northern Ontario would be in some difficulty to get the same rates.

For people in the north, that's a very important issue. Members here may not understand and know this, but some of the largest hydro customers in the province reside in northern Ontario. For an example, Kidd Creek

Mines in the city of Timmins is the single largest customer of hydro for the entire province. I wouldn't want to see a policy, through privatization, that would put the rates in jeopardy. I can tell you, when we froze hydro rates three years ago as the NDP government—it's a fallacy the present government is giving out that it froze hydro rates. All they did was continue a good policy of the NDP government to clean up Ontario Hydro, make it more efficient and to freeze hydro rates, and we had started that. But if we hadn't done that, Kidd Creek was seriously looking at going its own way when it came to the generation of hydro. In the end, that might have been good for them but it would not have been good for the rest of the hydro grid and the customers, because it would have meant we lost a lot of revenue from that particular area.

It is very important, in light of what's happening with Ontario Hydro, that we have in place some sort of citizens' utility board. Members here a little while ago cited ratepayers' associations as arguments for why you don't need such an organization. I differ from those members. In my riding, for example, like yours and many others, we have a ratepayers' association with the Roman Catholic separate school board, and that plays quite a positive role in being able to inform the community, the ratepayers, about what is happening.

Mr Speaker, just a quick question. My colleague will get a two-minute wrapup in addition to the time I have on the clock now, right? Very good. Thank you. Somebody had given me a note, but I wanted to make sure I was correct.

1150

The ratepayers' association in the city of Timmins for the Roman Catholic separate school board plays quite a positive role in being able to, first of all, inform ratepayers about what's happening. But to build that link and strengthen the link from the ratepayers to the school trustees that are charged with, through due election, running the school board and making decisions, I see that as a positive thing, because the more public involvement we have in those activities, the much better result that you get in the end. I can tell you from experiences I've had through the city of Timmins and Matheson and Iroquois Falls, where we have done things in a public way, we have ended up with better results in the end.

I see that what the motion from my friend here is bringing forward would create that. It's not in order to replace the current structures that we have with local municipal utility boards, not at all. I think what the member is trying to say is that we need to learn from the experiences that we have seen through ratepayers' associations and other kinds of watchdog organizations out there that are able to play a positive role to make sure that in the end those commissions do exactly what they do.

If the government moves forward in its deal to privatize, it will become even more important, because what it will mean in some cases is that those municipal utility boards may fall into the hands of the private sector. Then we will have no ability to be able to have public scrutiny of what is happening in regard to that particular utility. I

think that runs contrary to everything that we believe as New Democrats and I would argue, to a certain degree, that it's probably contrary to what the Tories have to argue.

I would certainly urge members of this House to support the motion put forward by the member for Fort York. It is a positive resolution that I think is a step in the right direction. It's something that we had started working on in government. I know the member had brought it to our Minister of Environment and Energy in 1994 and I know that Mr Wildman was looking at that issue and looking at how we're able to develop a model to do that. I would urge the government to carry on with that.

I just want to say one thing to my friend from the Liberal caucus in regard to his comments about us having one left wing: It is a heck of a lot better than having two wings on either side and never knowing which way you're going on any issue. I would like to see for once in this House where the Liberal Party can make up its mind which side of the fence it's sitting on. Do you support consumers and people, or do you really support the big business interests, the same interests that are supporters of the Conservative Party?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. You're wasting your time.

Mr Marchese: I know that the Liberal caucus had six minutes left on its time which it has not used. I would ask unanimous consent for me to use that time in order to bring together my arguments.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for establishing order in order for my voice to carry just a little.

Several things: Because I think some of the comments that have been made are not clear in terms of the things that I was saying, what we would do as a government is give the right, by legislation, to enclose a flyer in a utility company's billing envelope. That's all it would do. That's the extent of the government's involvement.

I'm not quite sure when the member for Northumberland talks about all of the things that he speaks of, but the government's involvement is simply to give a right, by legislation, to a CUB, citizens' utility board, to enclose a flyer in the billing envelopes that the utility normally sends out for its own bills. That's all we ask, as a government, to do. What is this extra layer of bureaucracy that you speak of? Are you frightened to have an independent consumer association? That's what it is?

Mr Galt: We have one.

Mr Marchese: We have one what? We don't have one. That's the point.

Mr Galt: Volunteer groups any day.

Mr Marchese: You say that we already have public utility commissions. Is that what you're talking about? You and the member for Dufferin-Peel were talking about the fact that we have public utility commissions. The point of it is that you have a few elected people, but it's

not the same as having 200,000 members being part of a citizens' utility board. It's not the same. This flyer would simply urge the consumers to join for \$5 or \$10. It is self-financing. I was telling the member for Dufferin-Peel that the government doesn't have to put a penny into this. The government doesn't have to pay a cent, and if you're worried about that, you simply establish that by law. If that is your concern, that you as a government would have to put in some money, simply say that is not its purpose, and then you'll free yourself as a government.

The point is that consumer advocacy here in Canada and in Ontario is literally dead. There is very little consumer advocacy going on, and in fact the Consumers' Association of Canada has never been able to function without government handouts. When you rely on governments that cut back—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: There are too many conversations taking place. I would ask you, please, to either go and speak outside or stay in the House and remain quiet.

Mr Marchese: The Consumers' Association of Canada is literally dead because it relies on government funding and the federal government has cut back. What does it mean? It means that consumers' association can't do an effective job of advocacy. It is therefore a weak consumer association. It cannot defend consumers because it has little money to do its job.

What I'm proposing says this association, CUB, would not rely on the government for money but would rely on its membership for money. It would be elected at a meeting once a year by the members. It has nothing to do with governments. We should not be interfering in such a process. They would hire their lobbyists, their lawyers, their experts, to deal with a utility if they feel that rates or practices are unfair. That's what it should do. What is so wrong with that? Why would the Conservative members on the other side oppose giving a right to consumers to be able to tackle such problems? Why would you be so worried about allowing such democracy to grow and to take place? Why would you be concerned about not giving them that tool that allows them to do this?

It is not an additional bureaucracy. That bureaucracy would not be there to attack the government, but rather to attack the utility if they found that the rates are too high or the practices are unfair. That's what it's supposed to do. So when the members opposite talk about creating another layer of bureaucracy—"How would they be elected?"—it is not a bureaucracy that we control. It's controlled by consumers, elected by consumers, nothing to do with us. It is not set up by us to attack the government on whether it privatizes or not. That's not the issue. But the member for Northumberland raises it as an issue. That's not what it does. Perhaps you invent that because you want to oppose it, but I think it's wrong to do that. What you are doing is denying the right to a consumers' association, a citizens' utility board elected by the consumers, funded by consumers—you're denying them the opportunity to grow democratically, to be able to tackle the problems of society, not as politicians but as consumers. I think that's a good thing to do.

Mr Galt: Did you ever hear of volunteers and volunteer organizations?

Mr Marchese: It would be an organization that would elect its structure, its executive, and then they would decide whether they need a lawyer or not to be able to advocate on their behalf.

So what am I saying about this?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): We're wondering.

Mr Marchese: If you repeat an issue seven times, it's very likely that the members will understand. So when I say, "What am I saying about this?" I say it as a way of repeating what I've said, because it's quite clear that both members opposite spoke against it not knowing what this issue was about. I'll run through it again to assist some of the Liberal members who chuckled about the fact that it wasn't clear to them.

To the Liberal members and the Conservative members who are confused by it, it is a citizens' utility board that would be self-financed by the members. All the government would do is to facilitate the inclusion of a flyer when a utility sends out its rates so that members are urged to join the citizens' utility board. That association would be elected by the members and controlled by the members. The expertise they would hire would be controlled by its membership to attack a problem of unfairness with utilities, utility rates and utility practices.

All that does is to strengthen consumer advocacy, something that it would seem to me Liberals and Tories would want to support. You are denying the public, the consumer, the taxpayer, that right to be empowered to control utilities in ways that governments are not as effective to do. I urge the members opposite to reconsider and not take a party position that is clearly adversarial and wrong.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles Morin): We will deal first with ballot item number 17, standing in the name of Mr Brown. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Mr Brown has moved private member's resolution number 10. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: It's carried. There's no vote.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Recorded vote.

The Acting Speaker: I will ask the question again: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Take your seats. We'll deal with the second item, and after that we'll call in the members for a vote.

CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARDS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with the second ballot item, number 18, standing in the name of Mr Marchese. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Mr Marchese has moved private member's resolution number 11. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bill.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Brown has moved private members' resolution number 10. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Fox, Gary	Martin, Tony
Arnott, Ted	Froese, Tom	Martiniuk, Gerry
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Grandmaître, Bernard	Miclash, Frank
Bassett, Isabel	Gravelle, Michael	Munro, Julia
Beaubien, Marcel	Grimmett, Bill	Murdoch, Bill
Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Boushy, Dave	Hastings, John	Pettit, Trevor
Boyd, Marion	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Jim	Johns, Helen	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Bert	Ramsay, David
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Ron	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Castrilli, Annamarie	Klees, Frank	Ross, Lillian
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Sampson, Rob
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Shea, Derwyn
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Skarica, Toni
Crozier, Bruce	Laughren, Floyd	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Duncan, Dwight	Marchese, Rosario	Wood, Len
Fisher, Barbara	Marland, Margaret	
Ford, Douglas B.	Martel, Shelley	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Wettlaufer, Wayne	Wood, Bob
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Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 61; the nays are 2.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARDS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with the motion of Mr Marchese.

Mr Marchese has moved private member's notice of motion number 11. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley
Boyd, Marion	Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony
Christopherson, David	Laughren, Floyd	Wood, Len

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Grandmaître, Bernard	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pettit, Trevor
Bassett, Isabel	Grimmett, Bill	Phillips, Gerry
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Ramsay, David
Brown, Jim	Johns, Helen	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Bert	Ross, Lillian
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Ron	Sampson, Rob
Castrilli, Annamarie	Klees, Frank	Shea, Derwyn
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Skarica, Toni
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Snobelen, John
Duncan, Dwight	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ford, Douglas B.	McGuinty, Dalton	Wood, Bob
Fox, Gary	Miclash, Frank	
Froese, Tom	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 12, the nays 52.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We have completed all matters related to private members' business. I will now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30.

The House recessed from 1216 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ALEX SKEAD

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I rise in the Legislature today to pay tribute to the life of Alex Skead, an aboriginal leader in my riding who passed away in Kenora on April 1.

Elder Alex Skead, one of Canada's most prominent elders, enjoyed the respect of all who knew and worked with him. I, along with many, will miss his involvement in the many events we shared together. Mr Skead will be remembered for his active participation in a number of community organizations, including the Kenora Indian Street Patrol, the Ojibway Tribal Family Services and the Sacred Circle Healing Centre.

Alex will also be remembered for his work on behalf of the first nation communities of Treaty 3, where he helped build the youth and elders complex, as well as the traditional roundhouse on Powwow Island.

As an elder and spiritual leader, Alex participated in many gatherings of aboriginal leaders throughout the country and was well-known and respected by heads of both the federal and provincial governments in Canada.

Alex gave his life in a positive way, seeking recognition for the rights of aboriginal people in Canada. He believed that our youth are the future, and because of his beliefs he dedicated much of his time and energy visiting schools and universities, sharing his knowledge and wisdom with the youth of our country.

To Elizabeth, his wife, Ruth, Ida, Wanda, Stanley and Patrick, his children, I want to assure them that they are in our thoughts and prayers during these difficult days. Meegwetch.

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I direct my statement today to Mike Harris, the Premier of Ontario. I travelled throughout the riding of Cochrane North during the strike and marched the OPSEU picket lines throughout Cochrane, Hearst and Kapuskasing. On March 23 and again the following week, I participated in solidarity marches through the streets of Kapuskasing and in Hearst in support of the OPSEU strike.

Time and again, the strikers voiced their objection to the treatment of civil servants and objection to your cuts in health care, education and social services. A representative of OPSEU 638, Hearst, handed me over 500 letters addressed to you in both English and French, and they're demanding that the Premier of this province resign because of his unsatisfactory work performance. They asked that I present these letters in the House.

"Due to poor job performance on your part and that of your government, I feel that I have no alternative but to dismiss you and the sitting members of your party. You have consistently failed to represent the people of this province," they say to the Premier.

Not everyone voted for you, Mr Harris. Fewer will be voting for you in the next election. I'd like a page to present these to Mr Harris.

SCARBOROUGH BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to bring to the attention of this House the business excellence of the city of Scarborough.

Last night, along with my colleagues Jim Brown and Steve Gilchrist, I had the wonderful pleasure of attending the 1996 Scarborough Business Excellence awards ceremony. Hosted by the Scarborough Chamber of Commerce and the Scarborough Mirror newspaper, the purpose of these awards is to highlight the efforts of the city's best entrepreneurs and showcase their talents, while promoting Scarborough as a great place to do business.

Twenty-six businesses were nominated for six awards, and I am proud to recognize the winners today in this chamber: Prototype Circuits Inc, Manchester Plastics Ltd, Reliable Bookbinders Ltd, Dumex Medical Surgical Products, ABCO Office Installations and ABCO Business Interiors and Centenary Health Centre. An honourable mention was given to Audio Products International Corp and Shaw Communications Inc.

Scarborough has a flourishing business community and last evening's awards ceremony is a testament to the success of Scarborough's businesses. I pose the question to every person and organization who chooses to bash the city of Scarborough, "Where were you last evening?"

Scarborough is, hands down, the greatest city in which to live, to raise a family, to relax, to work and, as last night's ceremony proves, to do business.

FAMILY SUPPORT OFFICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I rise today in support of the staff of the family support plan regional office in Thunder Bay and of all the regional offices across the province.

As the members of this House know, this government has taken no pains to disguise its interest in dismantling and/or centralizing this program meant to bring child support dollars to custodial parents. But like the staff of the Thunder Bay family support plan branch, which covers the terrain from White River to the Manitoba border, I question how this government intends to realize greater compliance in terms of arrears of hundreds of millions of dollars owed to the children of this province by choosing, without any consultation, to shut down an existing system without first working with the experienced staff of these offices to devise a better system to ensure significantly improved compliance, compliance that can only happen with regional staff in place.

How can a centralized Toronto version of the family support plan be successful in northwestern Ontario, for example, when the reduced staff will be located 1,500 kilometres away from their caseload and where voice mail and a 1-800 number will be the order of the day? I certainly don't see how, nor do the 2,500 constituents who've signed petitions in my riding.

I urge the Attorney General to work with the staff of the family support plan in Thunder Bay, to hear them out on their 19-point streamlining plan that would eliminate administration costs but ensure that vital, front-line service is maintained in northwestern Ontario. In short, I ask this minister to keep family support as one of this government's priorities.

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HOUSING CORP

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today to speak out on behalf of the thousands of tenants in my riding who live in Ontario Housing Corp buildings, who are very fearful, and I think legitimately, of this government privatizing those buildings.

I particularly want to acknowledge that I will be presenting to the House next week letters and petitions from more than 2,700 of those tenants who have committed their names to a public protest of what this government is considering. This was organized by Gwen Lee, Donna Bentley-Ward and Rose McGowan, who have worked tirelessly on behalf of their fellow tenants to try to get this government to understand the kind of devastation that would be heaped upon the people who live in these buildings.

It's interesting. When we look at an article in the Globe and Mail of yesterday by James Rusk, we see that the Canadian subsidiary of Citibank of New York, in a report regarding the potential privatization, says the cost to the Ontario government to administer such privatization would increase by one third.

We see something that makes no fiscal sense. We see something that makes no sense for the people living there. The only thing that makes any sense is that it fits the ridiculous, hard, right-wing ideology of this govern-

ment and its Common Sense Revolution. My constituents are hopeful that this government will wake up and—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

MEMBER'S WEB SITE

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): I'd like to take this opportunity to announce that I have launched a home page on the World Wide Web. I want to invite everyone to peruse it at www.clementmpp.org. My Web site will give users the opportunity to access my profile, link with other points of interest on the Internet and send messages directly to me.

This is just the beginning. As the Internet grows, so will my Web site. I'm not simply looking for legislative input. I'm also looking for new ways to improve democracy in Ontario. Ontarians are informed and are anxious to be part of the system. If enthusiasm and faith in the democratic process is to be maintained, we as legislators must investigate new means of communicating with our constituents. My Web site is such an investigation and represents a natural progression of politics in the 1990s. It will make the work of our Legislature more relevant to my constituency, across the province and, with the potential of the Internet, around the world.

This two-way technology will allow us to maintain better links with our constituents and make it easier for us to find out what voters think and ultimately shape public policy to accommodate their sentiments.

In this vein, I've made a personal commitment to my constituents whereby one third of all the questions and statements I pose in this House will be derived from input posted to my site. As legislators, we cannot ignore the changes occurring in the information age and must incorporate technology into our broader communications. I hope I have been able to make a contribution to the enhancement of democracy and accountability in Ontario.

1340

ADULT EDUCATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I recently visited the Adult High School in Ottawa, a school dedicated to offering a high quality education program to adult students who wish to complete their high school diploma. The students at the school who are concerned about this government's cuts have sent many letters, hundreds of letters, to the Minister of Education and Training.

Adult education works. Ontarians have been trapped in the long-term social assistance loop and are willing to go back to school, to stay in school, to complete their high school education. While the government talks about workfare so that welfare recipients will earn their welfare cheques, all these individuals are looking for is an education so they can earn a paycheck.

Today I'm delivering to the Minister of Education several hundred letters from these concerned students, and I ask the pages to take these to the minister's desk. The letters are personal testimonials about the success of this program. Here are a few excerpts from the letters:

"My main reason for attending Adult High School is to get off the welfare system completely and give my daughter a better future," says a single mother.

"Being a single parent with two children and being on social assistance has not been an easy task to perform. The Adult High School has given me much guidance... that will enable me to get off the social assistance programs and make a better life for myself and my two children."

Mr Minister, listen to these individuals and what they are saying. Your plans to cut funding to adult education will be disastrous. During the election, you promised to protect classroom education. Adult education is part of the classroom. I ask you to reconsider—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

KIDS' COUNTRY CLUB

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm pleased to rise today to talk about a wonderful facility in London, Ontario, called the Kids' Country Club. The Kids' Country Club is a respite home which is operated by the parents of technologically dependent children. It is an incorporated, non-profit association of families that have medically fragile and/or technologically dependent children.

For the last two years they have operated a respite care home on weekends for up to four children. They have been extraordinarily successful. They have been funded through the long-term-care program of the Ministry of Health, and they are seeking ongoing funding at the moment. What they want to do is to expand the care that they are able to give during the week for those families that have emergencies during the week, like deaths in the family, like illnesses themselves, so that those children can be cared for. They are seeking that funding.

In their first year they worked with 23 children from 22 different families on 50 different occasions. Some 75% of their clientele are from London and Middlesex. Some come from as far away as Windsor and Kitchener. These are families who are heroes. They spend hours and hours of their day caring for very fragile children who indeed deserve our best care. I will be asking the Minister of Health to support the ongoing funding for this home.

TARTAN DAY

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): It is with great pride that I rise before the House today to mark what is fast becoming a tradition in Ontario. This Saturday, April 6, will mark the fifth celebration of Tartan Day in the province. To recognize the multicultural nature of Ontario and the contributions of the Scottish to the economic, political and cultural wellbeing of this province, I introduced a private member's resolution in 1991 to proclaim April 6 Tartan Day. The resolution was supported by all three parties and has gone on to win the support of the people in Ontario.

April 6 is a great day in the history of Scotland. It was on this day in 1320 that the Scottish declared independence. In Grey county we are proud of our heritage. Tartan Day is not only an opportunity for Scots to show

their pride, but also gives children the opportunity to learn about their culture.

With Tartan Day activities and the recent success of movies like *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy*, Scottish heritage has taken on a new life. More and more young people are getting involved in pipe bands and other proud cultural activities.

It is very important that we continue to respect and commemorate our heritage. Therefore, I would like to thank everyone who has helped make Tartan Day such a success. It is with your continued support that Tartan Day will become a great tradition. On Saturday, I encourage all the people of Ontario to recognize the wearing of the tartan, the playing of the bagpipes, highland dancing and other aspects of Scottish heritage. April 6, Tartan Day, is a great day to recognize the contributions of the Scottish—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TORONTO ISLANDS COMMUNITY

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): From the outset, this government has had concerns regarding the Toronto Islands trust and the deal made by the previous government. Our concerns were about the cost to the province's taxpayers, the province's ongoing financial liability and the proposed new co-op housing development. We also had concerns that the island community had been given special consideration and benefits that were not available to all citizens of Ontario.

Last summer, this government commissioned an audit of the Toronto Island Land Trust. It found that the trust, which administers the leases on the island's residents' properties, was in debt by almost \$1 million.

This past February, we made a commitment to do a number of things: correct the financial problems of the Toronto Island community and limit the province's financial responsibility, including eliminating provincial guarantees of island mortgages. The sweetheart deal that had been put in place by the previous government is no longer acceptable.

This afternoon, I will introduce legislation that will put these measures in place. This legislation will eliminate the provincial obligation for mortgage guarantees for residents of the islands. It will not affect their ability to obtain conventional mortgage financing. Islanders will no longer receive special treatment and will have to obtain mortgages just like every other home buyer in the province of Ontario.

The legislation will eliminate any reference to the construction of co-op housing. The Flying Toad Co-op on the island was cancelled on July 25, 1995.

The Toronto Island Land Trust must get back on firm financial footing, and we will give it the means of doing so by allowing the sale of up to 12 lots. The trust will use the proceeds from the sale of these lots to pay off its debts. These lots will be within the existing residential

community, with access to existing infrastructure. There will be no further development in existing park areas.

We will remove the exemption from the Planning Act that was granted by the former government for the island community. This will ensure that any future development contemplated on the islands will be subject to the provisions of the Planning Act, as are all communities across Ontario.

The province will retain the responsibility for appointing trust board members to ensure financial accountability. At the same time, we will ensure that the board reflects the best interests of the entire community.

I am particularly pleased to say that the responsibility for the island community will eventually be transferred to the city of Toronto. The Toronto Islands, while unique in some respects, require many of the same services as any other residential neighbourhood. It only makes sense that such responsibility be assumed by the appropriate level of government.

The measures that I am announcing today will first and foremost eliminate the current and future financial liability of the province. It will restore the financial viability and accountability of the Toronto Island Land Trust, and it will protect the existing island community while at the same time protecting public spaces and parklands. It will transfer the responsibilities for the island trust and the residential community back to the local level, where it belongs.

I am confident that the amendments we are putting forward today will address the interests and concerns of all the parties involved with the Toronto Islands in a fair and responsible manner.

1350

DEREGULATION OF BUS TRANSPORTATION

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I rise today to introduce legislation that will move Ontario a step closer to a more competitive intercity bus industry. The government is committed to eliminating barriers to economic growth and investment. Tackling the red tape and regulatory burden is part of this effort. Government has no business telling bus companies how to run their operations, except in the area of safety for the passengers and for other people using the province's highways.

The legislation I am introducing today will allow a transition to full economic deregulation of the industry on January 1, 1998, a move that this government is committed to bringing about in an orderly manner. By establishing an interim regulatory system, we are allowing time for the industry to prepare to operate in a fully competitive environment.

We know that the current system does not guarantee service to small-town Ontario. During the past 15 years, approximately 400 communities across this province have lost their bus services. During the interim regulatory period, local entrepreneurs will be encouraged to provide services that are tailored to the travel needs of Ontario's small, rural and remote communities. Shifting away from an outdated system of regulation can only improve the chances for such communities to get the services they need.

The interim period will also allow time for the federal government to pursue bus deregulation in other provinces so that Ontario bus companies have access to other markets within Canada.

In a true spirit of partnership, we have worked with the industry to ensure a smooth and orderly transition to deregulation through this workable and cost-effective interim regulatory system. The intercity bus industry has agreed to pay the costs of the interim system, including an overhauled and more cost-effective Ontario Highway Transport Board.

We are convinced that the private sector is capable of providing service to small communities such as Armstrong, Dresden and Alexandria. In fact, operators have already expressed interest in replacing abandoned services or implementing new services to compete with existing operators. Economic deregulation of Ontario's intercity bus industry will lead to an efficient system that provides appropriate levels of service, based on market demand and the needs of the travelling public.

Safety is a priority with the Ministry of Transportation, and I assure the people of Ontario and members of this House that all necessary measures will be taken to ensure the continued safety of the intercity bus industry. Deregulation of the industry pertains only to the economic aspects, such as market entry. Existing and planned safety measures, including those announced in our road safety plan, will ensure that the intercity bus industry's excellent safety record is maintained.

The intercity bus industry has been regulated since the 1920s. It is the last Canadian transportation mode subject to market entry controls. This initiative applies to the scheduled, charter-tour and parcel express bus services provided between communities, not local urban transit systems.

We are confident that deregulation will encourage innovation on the part of the existing industry and the many potential new operators to ensure a viable and healthy intercity bus market that meets the needs of the people of Ontario.

These reforms are consistent with the red-tape review introduced by the government in the November 1995 economic statement. The Ministry of Transportation has been working with the Red-Tape Review Commission to eliminate all unnecessary or unfair barriers to business growth and job creation.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): It is my pleasure to announce that a working draft to reform the Condominium Act of Ontario will be released today. The working draft is a consolidation of 500 recommendations made by stakeholders in the condominium community over the past few years. I might add that there are some 700,000 people in Ontario who either live or work in a condominium.

Unit owners, developers, property managers and lawyers—those who operate under the Condominium Act framework—have told us the current act is outdated, inflexible and an obstacle to growth. A modern and

flexible legislative framework will position the condominium industry to respond effectively to the changing demographic profile of Ontario.

The existing Condominium Act needs to be reformed to deal with the issues and practices of today's condominium marketplace. There have not been any reforms since 1979 in this act. This reform will lead to legislation that will protect consumers while promoting economic development. Our goal is to create a modern and flexible piece of legislation that will serve the condominium community well into the next century. In recognition of these facts, we have developed a working draft in order to consult with stakeholders, which will be shared with stakeholders during an open consultation process.

While the reforms are numerous and diverse, they may be summarized into three general categories: (1) strengthening the protection of purchasers of condominiums, (2) improving the day-to-day operation and management of the condominium corporation, and (3) enabling the creation of new types of condominium development in our province.

I'm pleased to advise the House that the working draft document as well as a summary guide to the working draft are being made available to condominium stakeholders, MPPs, condominium corporations and to the general public. We have asked them to return their comments and suggestions to us within a six-week time period, ending about May 15. This will provide an opportunity for all interested parties to respond to the working draft prior to the introduction of the bill to this Legislature in the spring. If that bill should proceed through the legislative process, we of course would have a second consultative period during legislative committee hearings.

I urge all members at this time to encourage their constituents to participate in this consultation process. To this end, I have asked my parliamentary assistant, Jim Flaherty, to gather the written comments and suggestions of stakeholders, analyse the submissions and bring forward revisions to the working draft as quickly as possible. The changes embodied in the working draft reaffirm our government's goals of providing good government and spurring economic development in partnership with our stakeholders.

My honourable colleagues, with public input, we look forward to developing a solid package of much-needed reforms to this vital and growing segment of our economy. This issue crosses all party lines, and at the end of the consultative process I hope we will have legislation which is acceptable to all parties. I'm therefore inviting all members and all stakeholders to provide input to ensure that this legislation will reflect good government and the wishes of most of the people of Ontario.

PERSONAL PROPERTY SECURITY LEGISLATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): With the indulgence of the members, I would like to make a brief statement which I have not had the opportunity to pass to them on the personal property security amendments which we talked about yesterday and when the time periods would kick in.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I am happy to be able to tell the Legislature that the Ontario personal property security system is once again up and running. I wish to thank members of the opposition parties and of course all of my colleagues in the government for supporting the passage of this act yesterday which received royal assent yesterday.

As you will recall, the Personal Property Security Amendment Act provided a five-day business period for secured lenders to register the required information in cases where discharges were not filed, renewals could not be performed and other security instruments could not be registered during that period.

As I said in my opening remarks, the first day of the period is today. The offices will be closed tomorrow, Good Friday, and only electronic searching will be available on Easter Monday. So Friday and Saturday do not qualify as business days under the terms of the amendments because full services were not available. People who must register information to keep their priority position must do so by the end of next week, that is on Friday, April 12. So they have today, next Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to do their business.

I also announced yesterday that people who wish to register security interests which finance new equipment and inventory for businesses have 10 calendar days to comply with the rules. Ten calendar days from today is Saturday, April 13. Therefore, the effective deadline for providing the necessary information happens just by chance also to be next Friday, April 12.

Let me again thank the House for its cooperation yesterday and today.

1400

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I'm pleased to respond to the comments of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations with regard to the working draft to reform the Condominium Act. I'm pleased to respond to whom I'm coming to consider as the most powerful member of cabinet, because two days in a row we've had legislation either introduced or discussed by this minister.

After the débâcle of Bill 26, we are also pleased to note that this is the second piece of draft legislation, the first being the auto insurance legislation, that gives the public and ourselves an opportunity to respond. We look forward to gathering comments over the next six weeks and after that to seeing the legislation and commenting on it. We agree it's been far too long since this has been reviewed and revised and we will do all we can to assist in seeing that the proper legislation is brought forward.

TORONTO ISLANDS COMMUNITY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I'd like to respond briefly to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I guess he's basically trying to undo the deal first put together by Larry Grossman, and it's the sweetheart deal that the Tories certainly had complicity in.

DEREGULATION OF BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): My second point is that the Minister of Transportation's announcement today puts the foxes in charge of the henhouse. What's happened here is that they've disbanded a regulatory board of the government, the Ontario Highway Transport Board, and set up a board of the major bus carriers in the province which are now going to supervise busing in Ontario. That's like putting the banks in charge of banking. The major bus carriers have a conflict of interest.

The minister is saying the passengers and the small towns that are maybe going to lose their service will not have a role, that government will not protect them. They're going to have to rely on major bus carriers to protect their rights to have good bus service throughout Ontario. What's going to happen—as you know, they couldn't deregulate today because they found out that they couldn't stop the Quebec bus carriers from coming in here and poaching. So they want deregulation, but they don't want it. They say, "As long as we've got it for our greedy little hands here in Ontario, we'll keep it as sort of a half-measure of regulation but then we'll see what happens in 1998."

The same thing that happened in the UK will happen here. There will be cherry-picking right across Ontario. The private bus carriers will take all the best routes where they'll make money and all the small towns that need the routes that don't have the passengers will be left abandoned. Nobody will speak for them because they don't put money into the pockets of the big bus carriers. This province is going to have inferior bus service and it's going to have essentially a government that says it has no role to play in bus regulation. In other words, it takes a back-seat approach to the transportation network this province has grown accustomed to and is proud of.

I would say to this minister that before he proceeds with this, he should sit down with the passengers—not just with the big companies—sit down with all those people in small-town Ontario and ask them what they think about this deregulation. Don't just talk to the big bus companies. Talk to the ordinary citizens who need the buses to go to doctors' appointments, who need them to go to work, who need to visit. Ask them what they think about deregulation.

Hopefully what this will mean is that you will not just take away bus service and walk away from a responsibility, because as the Minister of Transportation you have a responsibility to provide good roads and good bus systems and not to say it's the private sector's obligation, because the private sector needs to be regulated to an extent where the public is protected.

You're walking away from that responsibility and what you're basically doing is saying that this government has no interest in guaranteeing good transportation. All you're interested in is promoting the profit of the big bus companies and forgetting the little people who need these bus services to get to their appointments.

TORONTO ISLANDS COMMUNITY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I rise to make comments in the name of Rosario Marchese, the member

for Fort York, who is ill today and asked me to do it in order to make comment with regard to the announcement that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has made with regard to the Toronto Islands.

I guess if there's anything good in the announcement that the minister has made today, it's simply this: He has finally removed the cloud that has hung over the islands since your government has come to power. Since the time your government has come to power, people have been wondering what's going to happen to the future of the island community with regard to their homes and what's going to happen with regard to daily living as they understand it now on the Toronto Islands.

What simply is going to happen with what you have done is that you are now going to allow infilling to happen within the community that will in turn allow enough money to be put into the land trust so it does not become insolvent. For that, I guess we can be thankful. But on the other side, what it also is going to allow is the prohibition of the construction of co-op housing.

I say to the minister, you don't have any progressive housing policies. We've seen that since you have been here. Seeing that you have no progressive housing policies I would suggest to the minister and to the government that you change your title from Progressive Conservatives to Regressive Conservatives.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I, of course, am responding to the announcement of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and indeed I speak on behalf of this caucus when we indicate that we welcome this opportunity.

I note that the minister has mentioned that the consultations have been occurring over the past few years, and my colleague Ms Churley, the member for Riverdale, insisted that I make reference to her and her leadership in that regard. I'd like to make claim myself, but in a mere six months one hasn't got the ability to do everything. I was preoccupied, as you well know, with public auto insurance.

What's of significant importance, though, is that we recognize that the condominium crisis—and I'm confident that there is a crisis that's very imminent in the condominium community—is isolated not just to Toronto, that although there are areas in common, there are some very unique qualities about condominium corporations and condominium developments as they tend to occur in smaller-community Ontario like Welland-Thorold, like the north, and a whole lot of other communities.

I think it's imperative that this review conducted by Mr Flaherty address in particular consumer protection and the protection of purchasers who are currently buying into condominiums that are underreserved, condominiums that have imminent failures of major cost items, that are simply going to attack any modest equity that those new purchasers have in those new acquisitions.

DEREGULATION OF BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I wish to respond to the announcement of bus deregulation by the

Minister of Transportation. It will come as no surprise to the Minister of Transportation that we think his idea is a bad one, is a destructive one. But let me go through the reasons why we think it is bad and destructive.

The fact of the matter is that people all across northern Ontario and rural Ontario have to have a good functioning bus service. It's essential for the proper performance of the economy, it's essential for senior citizens, it's essential for poor people especially, and it's essential in order that people can see the doctor, see the optometrist, see the dentist and all of those things that are part of ordinary life. People will not have this now, and the minister needs to understand this. In fact, I would suggest we'll buy you a bus ticket to let you see exactly how much these buses are needed by people across rural and northern Ontario.

Let me say also to the minister, we know what is going to happen here. We've had an experience with this government already with norOntair. This government said, "We'll walk in and we'll put an end to norOntair and the private sector will come in and will pick up the airline service." Well, there are all kinds of communities in northern Ontario now that have no air service thanks to this Conservative government.

The private sector is only interested in picking up the most profitable routes. They are only interested when they can cream off the profits. As far as they're concerned, if the route isn't profitable, "Then we don't care, and people can do without."

Let me say to the Minister of Transportation that this won't work. This is going to be very destructive. What this is really all about is that the big bus companies want to use this as a means of shedding their union contracts. That's what this is about, lowering workers' wages, and you don't care about rural and northern Ontario.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): There's one more negative impact the Minister of Northern Development and Mines should think about with respect to the statement made by his colleague: the impact on the ONTC. Between the cuts in the provincial subsidy of your government and your negative policies being implemented in the announcement today, that agency will no longer be in a position to generate commercial revenues to continue to provide important transportation and communication services in northern Ontario. You need to think—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired. It is now time for oral question period.
1410

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: Do we have unanimous consent for a statement? It's been agreed to by all three parties.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

CONSTABLE MIKE GULA

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I rise in the House today on a sad and tragic occasion. Tuesday night, at approximately 8 o'clock, Provincial Constable Mike Gula was struck by a vehicle while performing his duties on the Queen

Elizabeth Way in Niagara region. Constable Gula was transported to hospital, but succumbed to his injuries.

We are always saddened when a police officer is killed while performing his or her duties. It serves as a reminder that the men and women who do police work choose to put their lives on the line every day to protect us, whether they are facing the obvious perils of combatting crime or, in this case, routine traffic patrols.

The tragedy of Constable Gula's death is compounded by the fact that he was only four months short of his retirement after serving the people of Ontario as an OPP officer for the past 29 years in the Niagara-St Catharines area.

Constable Gula was a well-liked and dedicated traffic officer who enjoyed computers and sports. He was involved in detachment planning, and each year helped organize the OPP Association's brotherhood banquet night. Always in good spirits, he would at times drop in on the Niagara Falls tourist bureau to talk with tourists entering the province.

The people of Ontario were well served by Constable Mike Gula. Constable Gula will be sorely missed by his friends, colleagues and family. To his wife, Zan, and his four children, I offer condolences on behalf of the government, all ministry staff and the members of this House. I also want to express my sincere thanks to Constable Gula's family for the good work of their departed husband and father. We all know that the efforts of an individual often involve a family commitment and support, and our prayers are with them.

I would ask all members of the House and all in attendance to please join me in a moment of silence to pay tribute to Provincial Constable Mike Gula.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I rise on behalf of the official opposition, the Liberal caucus, and as well, I suppose even more so, as a resident of St Catharines, because of course Constable Gula was from St Catharines and had served his community and the people of our area for so many years.

I know that all members of this House and all residents of the city of St Catharines and the Niagara region have been deeply saddened by the tragic death of Constable Michael Gula of the Ontario Provincial Police.

As members will be aware by now, and as the Solicitor General has pointed out, Constable Gula was doing what he did so often, and that was assisting someone else, in this case another OPP officer, on the Queen Elizabeth Way near McLeod Road in the Niagara Falls area, when he was struck by a passing vehicle.

Those who knew Michael Gula in our community held him in very, very high esteem, as did his fellow officers. It was interesting. You wouldn't call it a press conference obviously; it was an individual asked to comment about a fellow police officer. I want to share that with members of the House:

"OPP Constable Stan Feeney said Gula was an officer whose 'infectious, jolly attitude about life' could change the mood when he walked into a room.

"'He was a very valued, likable, happy-go-lucky member of our detachment,' Feeney said...Gula was a respected and efficient officer who always had a smile on his face."

He had worked, of course, with the OPP in Niagara for 29 years and lived in the St Catharines area itself for more than 20 years. Mr Gula, as has been pointed out, was married, with four grown children who live in the Niagara area. As the Solicitor General has appropriately pointed out, it's tragic no matter when it happens and under what circumstances, but Mike Gula was going to be retiring in just a short period of time, having served 30 full years as a police officer for the OPP, to take up some of his other activities in the community and to spend the kind of time that people like to spend with their families.

All of us know that it is a difficult job to be a police officer. A police officer's life is on the line all of the time that individual is on duty, and this was a rather innocuous situation where one might not expect that to be the case. Once again, it demonstrates that no matter what activity a police officer is involved in, that activity could involve the loss of that individual's life. The stress that is placed on the family—and the Solicitor General has appropriately pointed out that the family in all of these circumstances faces a certain amount of stress and concern over the lifetime because a police officer is always in that position.

Certainly I know that all of us on this side of this House and all members of the House and all people of our community, and I'm sure all people of Ontario, send our condolences to his wife, his family, his friends and all who knew him.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I am saddened but honoured to pay tribute on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus, but indeed on behalf of some 400,000 people from the Niagara region and so many other folks in this province who were served, and served well, by Constable Mike Gula of the Ontario Provincial Police.

He joined the force on October 10, 1967, and, as has been mentioned, had served for 29 years and was but four months away from a retirement that he was very much looking forward to, although Mike never would have totally been able to leave behind his policing career, not just the camaraderie with the women and men who serve in the Ontario Provincial Police force out of the Niagara detachment, but the opportunity that he had—again, it's been referred to but warrants restating—to be involved in other people's lives, and not just in the role of a police officer identifying crime or apprehending criminals, but in the role of somebody who is out there on our highways, on our roadways offering assistance when he could and indeed lending his very unique philosophy of life to those around him.

So many who knew Constable Gula were aware of that philosophy. It was one where not only did he always look at the positive side of things, but he encouraged—he didn't just encourage, he insisted that others look at the positive side of things too.

We know that he served in Niagara region. He served specifically in the Niagara Falls detachment and in the St Catharines detachment when they were separate from one another. He also was one of the OPP officers who served in Grand Bend during the summer postings that are required there because of the increased complement of visitors to the Grand Bend area.

He was, I tell you this—again, my relationship with Constable Gula goes back a good chunk of time now—a very valued member of the Ontario Provincial Police, of that Niagara detachment, and he was valued because of his very professional qualities as a police officer. At the end of the day, the fact is that Mike Gula was a cop's cop, no two ways about it. He had a strong respect for the role of policing in our community and he had a vision about the role of policing that required him, compelled him to go the extra mile. He was one of those people who gave far more to his job and to his community than he ever took back. He was an extremely likeable person. 1420

One of the interesting tests—understanding that police officers at times have to interfere in people's lives in an unpleasant way, even the process of stopping speeders on the QEW, as part of the traffic detail, oftentimes that can generate some acrimony on the part of the person who's being apprehended and ticketed.

Mike Gula was the kind of police officer who would enforce the law, perform his responsibilities and his duties to the absolute degree, yet he was also the sort of guy who, when offenders drove away after being dealt with by him, those very offenders understood what had happened, understood that Mike Gula had fulfilled his responsibilities and left, rather than with anger and bitterness about having been stopped, with a sense of understanding, and indeed Mike Gula imparted to them that jovial, optimistic sense that he had, a philosophy and approach that he had to life.

He is surely going to be missed by the women and men serving out of the Niagara detachment. He's going to be missed by all of those people in Niagara region who work in the administration of justice, be it in the traffic courts, the provincial prosecutors, the defence counsel, the folks who work through that system; he's going to be missed by his community, no two ways about it, and he's going to be missed in a way that none of us will really ever be able to comprehend by Zan, his wife, by his children, Robbie Gula and Kevin Gula and Patrick McGrath and Tammy McGrath, and it's so difficult to convey to Zan and Robbie and Kevin and Patrick and Tammy how sad and indeed how incredibly sad we are to lose a member of the Ontario Provincial Police, a committed member of a police force but four months away from retirement.

I want to join the others here in expressing to the members of the Ontario Provincial Police in Niagara, to Zan and Mike Gula's children, our most sincere condolences, our strong and deep sympathies and our understanding and hope that they can take some comfort in the fact that Mike Gula will be missed by literally hundreds, and I hope they take some comfort in the fact that Mike Gula performed his responsibilities in the Ontario Provincial Police with integrity, with honour and with a passion and compassion for his fellow humankind.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I would like to thank the Solicitor General, the member for St Catharines and the member for Welland-Thorold for their comments and I will have a copy of them sent to Mrs Gula.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FOOD BANKS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, this morning the Daily Bread Food Bank released a survey based on interviews conducted at 39 food banks across the greater Toronto area. The results of those surveys are very disturbing indeed.

The number of people in the greater Toronto area who are forced to rely on food banks is up 54% over last year. The number of people who are forced to miss meals has doubled because the food banks just can't keep up with the needs of hungry families. One out of every five people showing up at food banks in the greater Toronto area have already gone without food for at least two days.

Minister, the food bank says there is a direct link between your government's cuts and the increase in hunger in Metro Toronto. Your patronizing response till now has been to suggest a ridiculous \$91-a-month diet or to tell people to go out and bargain for 69-cent tuna. The Premier has said that many people are homeless because they choose to be homeless. Tell me, Minister, do you also think that hunger is increasing because people are choosing to be hungry?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): First of all, I'd like to take the opportunity to commend the people who work and give their time and donations to help people and continue to do so, and also who help encourage people to assist each other in the communities. I think it's very important. I think that all along certainly the Premier and myself and many of my colleagues have indicated it's good for the communities to work together, and certainly the food bank is a good initiative. We also realize that living on a restricted budget is challenging for some people.

I really do have to suggest and say that our welfare rates are 10% above the average of the other provinces, and combined with that, we did give people the opportunity to earn back the difference between the old and new rates and we do truly hope and feel that a part-time job will lead to a full-time job. Clearly, the old system didn't work and that's why we're doing the fundamental reform right now to the welfare system.

Mrs McLeod: I don't think that getting people to feed deer in northern Ontario is going to do anything to help families on welfare feed their children, and we are talking about children here, Minister. Let's keep a focus on the children who are on welfare in this province and who are going hungry.

The number of children who are hungry has gone up by 50%. We're talking about children, Minister, who are going to bed hungry. We're talking about children who don't have proper clothes. We're talking about children who go to school and can't learn properly because they are hungry and they are cold. These children are hungry today and they are hungrier, Minister, than they were the day that your government took office. Your government has offered these children absolutely no hope at all that their lives will be better. You've made them this ridicu-

lous promise that if you give people in the province a massive cash bonanza that goes to the wealthiest citizens, somehow, some day, the children of the poor are going to benefit. You've given them condescending food tips like having bread without butter or having pasta with no sauce.

Minister, I think today is the day when you should just admit that you have no hope to offer these children. Just tell them that they have to go to bed hungry, that they have to do their part so you can deliver your tax cut to the wealthy Ontarians.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Certainly we want to help people break the cycle of dependency and get back into self-sufficiency. Frankly, to the Leader of the Opposition, you had the opportunity yourselves to try to fix the system. The system obviously did not work. There was usage of food banks, certainly a high usage, when you were in power as well. You didn't do anything to change the system. You didn't do anything to really fundamentally reform the system so it worked.

We were left with a massive problem here. That's why we're undertaking a fundamental reform. That's also why we're going to introduce the opportunity for people to participate in Ontario Works. This will give people the opportunity to break the cycle of dependency and to lead to self-sufficiency.

Mrs McLeod: Neither did we cut welfare rates for families with children in order to give a tax cut to the wealthiest people in this province.

If the minister wants to go back and talk about changes, there were fewer people using the food banks when we were in government. We were starting to get a handle on it. What we are seeing now is the ball rolling back down that hill and 50% more people using food banks this year than last year, and that is a direct result of this government's policies.

Minister, we are talking about hunger here today and the statistics that show a massive increase in hunger since your government started its slash-and-burn programs. We're talking about homelessness, the 16% of those food bank users who have been evicted or threatened with eviction from their homes. We're talking about people being cold because one in three of those food bank users don't have winter clothing because they need to use their dollars for food. We are talking about joblessness for these people, because these people don't have the money to do a job interview, to go to that interview, because they don't even have the money for public transit.

1430

Minister, I suggest to you today that hunger is not a lifestyle choice, homelessness is not a lifestyle choice, children growing up without food, without hope, are not making lifestyle choices, and joblessness is not a lifestyle choice. When are you going to start caring, when are you going to start doing something that is real and positive for the growing list of casualties of your Common Sense Revolution?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Before the Leader of the Opposition begins to start to pooh-pooh the idea of the opportunity that's involved with the workfare, Ontario Works, I'd like to just remind her that the Calgary Herald of March 26, 1995, reported: "Liberal leader Lyn McLeod

said she planned to cut welfare payments to single mothers who refuse to perform community service or go to school. 'If people refuse to participate in a program, their payments would be reduced,' McLeod said in an interview on Global television. 'Community service is completely suitable for people who have small children,' she said. 'In fact, it's one of the ways to make them feel as though they're not just somehow receiving welfare and caught in this welfare trap.'"

I think the honourable member should look and see what her own words have said in the past and reflect upon those.

Mrs McLeod: I'm aware of what my own words are and what my own programs would be. I'd be happy to welcome any questions that the minister might like to direct to me.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

MINISTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE AND TOURISM

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a question to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. As politicians, we're used to the idea of people second-guessing our policy decisions. That's part of the give and thrust of politics. It's another question when people publicly are starting to question our competence.

I would like to ask the minister what his response is to an article that appeared, and it talked about the minister's performance in discussions between the federal and provincial governments. It says the minister is regarded as a bust in federal circles. The reason, and they give some examples: "Whenever the topic does come up at federal/provincial meetings, Saunderson merely reads from his briefing notes, even when the contents do not pertain to the topic." And we have certainly seen that in the House. The other thing that happens, it says, is that "Saunderson on the other hand is asleep at the switch and we all pay while he dozes."

Mr Minister, what is your reaction to this ever-increasing public questioning of your competence?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): May I say that I guess he's referring to—can you guess it?—the Toronto Star. That newspaper is one of the greatest supporters of the Liberal Party that we have in Canada, as you know, and I know the article to which he refers. To me it was a wonderful plant by one of the ministers in Ottawa, for the simple reason that Ontario under our government does not knuckle under at all times to what the federal government has to say.

Mr Kwinter: Mr Speaker, I'm going to give the minister another chance to defend his competence, and this has got nothing to do with any newspapers. You will know that in the last few days a major trade topic that has been at the top of the agenda in this country is the softwood lumber dispute and the reaction of the four provinces that are severely impacted by it: Alberta, Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario.

I have a letter that has been addressed to the Premier, and I have to say in the many years that I have been in this House, I don't think I've seen a letter of this type

written, not only written but circulated, to some members in the government. I want to quote a couple of things from it. It's from the Ontario Forest Industries Association. I don't think, by any stretch of the imagination, it can be perceived to be the representative of a newspaper or of a special interest other than its own particular interest. I'd like to quote from this letter written April 3.

"Dear Premier

"I would like to express disappointment at the treatment we received from W. Saunderson, Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism."

Then it says—and I think it is important that all members listen to this:

"The minister who is responsible for trade has not seen fit to acknowledge, let alone respond to, letters sent in February by presidents of large companies such as Tembec, Malette and E.B. Eddy, or from small companies such as Midway Lumber. Neither has he responded to letters written by me on March 6 and March 27. Phone calls by several individuals were placed last week to the minister in his office. None has been returned."

This is an issue where Ontario's very livelihood in this sector is at risk. To me, it is unacceptable that the minister responsible for those negotiations would not even acknowledge concerns expressed by that sector, would not return calls, and would actually trigger such unhappiness that they would see fit to take the step of writing to the Premier and spelling out their concerns.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Mr Kwinter: Minister, what is your defence? If this doesn't—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Saunderson: On to another subject. The subject is the softwood lumber negotiations that have been going on. I can tell the honourable member that I have been in negotiation, or my department's been in negotiation regarding the softwood lumber arrangements for the last two months. We have not only been in negotiation with the United States but also, of course, with Ottawa, British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta. I don't understand that letter and it doesn't make sense to me, because we have a huge file on this particular situation.

We regret, I might say, more than any other province has issued any statement about a regret, that we had to succumb once again to export controls as dictated by the United States.

I'm happy to say that a deal has been reached by the federal government and the United States on softwood lumber. The deal is that instead of being countervailed by the United States, the federal government will impose a levy on exports over a certain limit made by various companies in Canada. That is a better arrangement than what was proposed originally, and it was Ontario and my ministry, our government, that made sure it was going to be properly done and that Ontario's base would be 1.95 billion board feet, not the much smaller amount proposed early in the negotiations. We're very happy with what we have done.

Mr Kwinter: I think the minister misses a very critical point, and that is that the role of government is to

represent the best interests of its citizens and the component entities that are part of that citizenry.

The minister has just been talking about how they were at the forefront and leading the attack in getting the best deal for Ontario. Again I have a letter from the same association, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, the spokesperson organization for the industry. In a letter to the Minister for International Trade, it says, "I realize how close we came to losing this battle with the Americans, and I deeply regret that it was the government of my province that was the prime stumbling block."

Rather than saying you were at the forefront in resolving this, it is perceived by those people in the industry in this province that you were the prime stumbling block. I say to you, Mr Minister, rather than being open for business, you're really indicating that you're out to lunch.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Further on the subject, may I say that the arrangement that was reached was because of Ontario and no other level of government. We had to make sure that our base of 1.95 billion board feet was the basis for the negotiations. When the negotiations started a week ago, it was said that our base would be something like 1.2 billion board feet. There's a big difference between 1.95 billion and 1.2 billion, and we made sure that it was the 1.95. May I say that had we not stood up and made our point, Ontario producers would be working from a much smaller base. That's all I can say on that.

1440

WORKFARE

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I have a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The minister constantly tells the House that the welfare system that we've had in place in Ontario hasn't worked and that he's going to bring in a new idea called "work for welfare," when we all know it's not a new idea; that's the old welfare system. There is evidence that suggests that workfare does not help people get jobs, and the minister knows that.

The Alberta model has been in place since 1993, and to date there is no evidence to show that it helps people get back into the workforce. The Caledon Institute of Social Policy states that here in Ontario prior to 1966, welfare recipients were used as cheap labour to shovel snow, clear bush and do roadwork, something I've heard the minister talk about. The placements improved neither the skills nor the employability of the participants; moreover, municipalities actually traded their regular employees for welfare recipients.

The results of California's GAIN program are, "Even in this relatively successful program, employment and earnings impact did not result from participation in the program in the short term." In the US, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that only a handful of people in workfare programs achieved a stable source of employment that provides enough income for a decent standard of living.

I'd like to ask the minister, why does he think his old 1960s approach to welfare is going to work in Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): First of all, our approach is not an

"old 1960s approach." I don't know if the honourable member has ever learned about learning from his mistakes in the past and trying to improve a system or systems that they've examined.

It is quite true we have looked at a number of jurisdictions. We've looked at jurisdictions in the States, we've looked at the Alberta model, Quebec, New Brunswick and several international models as well, I might add. But the one thing that we're looking at is a made-in-Ontario solution. I think that's very important, because Ontario is not the United States, as much as the opposition might lead us to think so. I guess they're probably enamoured with the United States, especially the third party over there, because they probably like the state of Tax-us.

Clearly, we're looking for community based solutions here, and that's the real difference. We recognize the fact that there's a real difference between different regions of this province, whether it's rural Ontario, the agricultural areas, inner-city, suburbia. We have to have a program that's flexible, that meets the needs of communities. That's why it's community based; that's why it's going to be bottom up as opposed to top down, as the prior governments were so keen to do.

Mr Cooke: The minister can say that this is going to be a made-in-Ontario solution, but when one goes through the ministry documents, all of the examples they give are American models. That's where the studies have taken place; that's where the minister is looking at the models. They look at Wisconsin in particular.

The fact of the matter is that independent studies that have been carried out, whether it's the Caledon Institute or whether it's the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in the United States, all have come to the conclusion that workfare doesn't work.

I'd just simply like to ask the minister, can the minister tell us today or file with the table in the House today a list of studies that demonstrate that workfare works if in fact the criterion is gaining independence and work in the general public? Is that the goal? If that's the goal, table the studies that show this will work.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Clearly, the honourable member has forgotten that the old way didn't work, and I do have to reference my remarks to the last 10 years. When the welfare caseload goes from 457,000 people to 1.3 million people, where the costs of the system go up by 350%, where one out of 10 people is on welfare when we took over the government, clearly the old way didn't work.

Obviously, we need to do new reforms, try new ways. As much as the honourable member would like you to believe that somehow we're going to get tied to other models, we're very clear that we have to find a made-in-Ontario solution.

I don't know if the honourable member really has ever heard about consultation, which is what we're doing. That's what we're trying to find: a way that workfare, our Ontario Works program, will work, as opposed to the old system.

Mr Cooke: Let's just take one area as an example. In Waterloo last fall there were 10,500 general welfare recipients, 7,500 family benefits recipients and 9,000 unemployment insurance claimants. That's just in one area. There were 2,000 known job vacancies. Today's

unemployment statistics show that there are 517,000 people still unemployed in this province.

What jobs are you going to be transferring people to through the workfare program? There are no jobs in the province. The unemployment rate is still nearly 9%.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: There are a number of initiatives here. Certainly, with Ontario Works our main aim is to get people back to work. We also want to try to assist them and to—

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): David, wait till Patrick Watson gets finished with you.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Welland-Thorold has been continuously out of order, and I won't warn him again.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Although it is very interesting to listen to the member for Welland-Thorold, who from time to time has some very interesting remarks to make, those not shared by his party as well, no matter how the honourable member would like you to believe that somehow this is not going to work, the people of Ontario are waiting for this. The people of Ontario are ready to assist the government. We've had many organizations across the province that have come forward and said, "Yes, we are willing to participate, willing to help you."

Let me just add to this, since it's referenced to the third party, that Mr Silipo, who was in my position about a year ago, indicated about the system at that time, "It isn't helping unemployed people to learn new skills and find new jobs"—

Mr Kormos: There are no jobs for them to go to.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Welland-Thorold has been warned. I will ask the member to leave. I'll name the honourable member for Welland-Thorold. Mr Kormos. Would he leave the chamber. Sergeant at Arms.

Mr Kormos left the chamber.

1450

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. I'm not going to question his competence, but rather his commitment to jobs.

We know that the situation is not getting better. The situation is getting worse. We saw in March that Ontario lost another 1,000 jobs in this province. But today I want to talk to the minister particularly about the disturbing trend we are seeing of many large corporations—banks and other large corporations—making more and more profits with fewer and fewer workers.

I know that this minister and indeed many across the floor like to talk a lot about their Common Sense Revolution, or the CSR, as they affectionately call it, but I want to suggest to this minister that there's another CSR that he particularly should be concerned about, and that is the corporate social responsibility; the corporate social responsibility not to just simply make profits, but to also be able to turn some of those profits into more jobs for people. What I want to ask this minister is what action has he taken, or will he take, to ensure that this corporate social responsibility is lived up to, that companies don't

continue to simply make more and more profits with fewer and fewer workers?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I believe, as my party believes and this government believes, in the spirit of free enterprise. From time to time it's necessary for businesses, just like good governments, to make cutbacks. If businesses have to make cutbacks, then that is their business, just like it is our business if we have to make cutbacks in order to get our fiscal house in order. So I have no intention, nor would this government have any intention, of telling businesses what they should and should not do.

Mr Silipo: I thought that the minister and his colleagues believed what they said in their Common Sense Revolution, that their top priority was to get jobs back into this province, and instead what we are seeing is just a commitment to the free enterprise system, which is fine and well, but it's not working. It's not creating the jobs, because we aren't seeing more jobs come as a result of this firm belief in the free enterprise system; we're seeing fewer jobs.

I know sometimes it seems that the members across do listen to what public opinion says, and so I want to suggest to the minister that perhaps he might want to pay attention to one recent poll that came out, which was released last week, an Angus Reid poll, which said that about 73% of Ontarians considered it unacceptable for large companies to lay workers off while making high profits, and that a large number of Ontarians—about 44%—support the idea that these profitable companies that dump workers should be required to pay higher taxes or some other penalty.

Why is the minister not looking at that as a solution in terms of channelling some of those profits back to the companies such as small business, for example, that are creating the jobs? Why is he simply taking this hands-off approach when clearly this hands-off approach is not working?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Sometimes I wonder if they listen over there to what we are saying in our good statements about jobs. We've talked about creating 725,000 jobs, and we're doing it. We have said repeatedly in the last 10 days what the job results have been, and we referred to February—the month of February, I say it again, 31,000 new jobs. That is better than any February since 1981.

Let me just point out something to the member. I've got some articles here from the newspaper about a survey done by the committee for independent business. There are some very telling headlines here about jobs: "Ontario Businesses Back Tax Cut Plan." "Tax Cut to Create Jobs, Survey Says." "Small Business Survey Sees Jobs from Tax Cut." "CFIB Says Tax Cuts Mean Jobs." Are we listening and reading these articles? We are. Are you?

Mr Silipo: On the rhetorical level, I would say the minister's competence has improved, but that's not going to get us any further ahead here. I think the minister can try to bury his head all he wants in the sand and ignore not what I am saying but what people across the province

are saying, indeed, what companies are also saying, which is that it is fundamentally wrong for corporations, whether banks or others, whether it's the Bank of Montreal, with profits going up 20%, laying off 1,400 workers, whether it's companies like Inco, with profits going up 3,300%, laying off 2,000 workers—the point is that there is something wrong when companies are making more and more profits and laying off more and more workers at the same time. You have an obligation, a responsibility to use the powers of government you have, the taxing powers you have, if necessary, which is what the public is saying you should be doing, to ensure that companies also live up to their social responsibilities.

You have said, and I agree with you, that small business creates jobs. Why not use some of the profits from those large companies that don't seem to care at all about what's happening in the economy and put that into incentives, put that into tax breaks for companies that will create the jobs? You can't just wash your hands of the responsibility, Minister. When will you start to do your job, to really help create jobs in this province?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I am saddened to see a political party proposing to shackle companies in this province. We lived with that philosophy for five years with you and five years over there. What have we got? High unemployment, which is now starting to come down—more jobs. Let me conclude by saying that a strong corporate profit performance produces higher taxes for this province.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance, who I know will have current information, not like the previous minister. Today, as you know, Minister, you published your first-quarter employment results, and they are very concerning to us in the Liberal caucus.

You've been in office now for nine months and we see here that in the first three months of 1996, the number of people out of work in the province has actually gone up by 20,000 people. I'm particularly troubled because 13,000 of them are young people; we are very concerned about young people.

You've been in office nine months. We see in the first three months of this year 20,000 more people out of work. I think you would acknowledge that your cuts in the level of employment in the public sector have not yet hit, so we will find that hitting over the next few months. You promised in the campaign that the unemployment numbers would be dropping. Why are there 20,000 more people out of work in Mike Harris's Ontario than at the same time a year ago under a different government?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): The honourable member will also know that in the last six months Ontario has gained 65,000 jobs.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): The big lie.

Hon Mr Eves: I say to the member for Nickel Belt, those are indeed the facts. The reality is that the Ontario economy has gained 65,000 jobs in the last six months. As a matter of fact, if you take out the impact of the General Motors people who were not working because of a strike in the United States, the Ontario economy has

created an average of 12,000 jobs per month over the last seven months. At that rate, between July 1995 and December 2000 we would create 766,000 jobs.

Mr Phillips: We're beginning to see the cold, hard face of the Common Sense Revolution. Minister, those are your numbers I just quoted to you: 20,000 more people out of work in the first quarter of 1996. In your own fiscal document you predict more people out of work in 1996, this year, than last year, and then in 1997, next year, you predict more people out of work than this year.

Halfway into this Common Sense Revolution, you yourself predict more people out of work, more people in the unemployment ranks in the province than when you came into office. We saw yesterday that the Help Wanted index dropped dramatically in Ontario, the worst in the country, down 16%. We saw small businesses' optimism about the future far weaker for 1996 than it was in 1995. **1500**

My question is this: Don't you find it unacceptable that you, yourself, are predicting the number of people out of work going up this year and next year, and will you guarantee that in the budget coming up in the next few weeks that will be corrected and we will not see the number of unemployed continuing to rise over the next two years under the Harris government?

Hon Mr Eves: The Ontario economy is projected to grow by 81,000 jobs in 1996 and 100,000 jobs in 1997. Data Resources thinks that the Ontario government's projections are too low and it projects that 146,000 jobs will be created in 1997.

We are using prudent, cautious economic assumptions for our fiscal planning purposes, and I say to the honourable member, we are doing an average annual comparison that is, in our opinion, the true method of measuring job creation. It is the same method, I say to the honourable member, that Bob Nixon used in every single one of his budgets, it's the same method that was used by Floyd Laughren in every single one of his budgets and it's the same measure that's been used by every finance minister in recent memory in the province of Ontario. So if it was good enough for Bob Nixon, it should be good for the want-to-be leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

SOFTWOOD LUMBER EXPORTS

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. This week we learned that the Canadian government was signing a deal with the US which will slap an export tax on US-bound softwood shipments. Just a few weeks ago, the Liberal trade minister said that an international levy would be outside the principles of the North American free trade agreement, yet still the federal Liberal government moved ahead. Many single-industry towns in northern Ontario that rely on the lumber industry are going to be significantly affected by this decision. Clearly Ontario is a large player in these discussions.

Minister, what was your involvement in these discussions that resulted in an export tax? I understand from recent press reports that the revenue from the export tax will go into the provincial treasury. This is a new tax on

northern Ontario industries. Did your government oppose the export tax on softwood lumber, and how much money will the province receive from this new tax?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): A deal has been reached, as the honourable member has noted, between the federal government in Canada and the federal government in the United States on softwood lumber exports.

Trade Minister Eggleton had decided that it was in the national interest to agree to limit exports of softwood lumber to the United States, and accordingly has put on export controls, as you know. Our position was, and it's been clear and consistent all through these negotiations, that we do not accept export controls. We made it very clear to them. I am very disappointed with the federal government's decision about imposing export controls.

Mr Len Wood: For a government that claims to want to cut taxes, why didn't you vigorously oppose the move by the federal Liberal government? After all, it was a Progressive Conservative government that sold us the bill of goods on free trade and set the stage for NAFTA. Progressive Conservative governments have long argued that free trade agreements were needed to prevent this type of action, yet your government has remained relatively silent on this issue.

Minister, time and time again we've heard from your government that taxes kill jobs, and yet you've increased taxes on northern Ontario industry. There's now a 15% export tax on Ontario softwood lumber. Can you tell this House today how many jobs the government expects to be lost because of this tax grab that will go to the provincial treasury? I understand if it would have been implemented last year, you're talking about \$175 million that they're taking out of northern Ontario, a tax grab that's going to kill jobs, hurt northern Ontario single-industry towns.

Hon Mr Saunderson: To the honourable member, we do not anticipate that jobs will be lost. In fact, if anything, jobs, we feel, will be gained because of the excellent climate we are creating in this province to create jobs and encourage business.

I might say that on the matter of softwood lumber, this matter was under the jurisdiction of the federal government—you know that—and they have made their decision. We tried to avoid, as I say, the export controls. They were not able to resist imposing the controls. Unfortunately, the government went ahead and accepted imposing these controls. We were very strong. I have here a number of letters saying just what our position was, that we did not want export controls, but it was the federal government's decision to impose the controls.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Increasingly, much of the economic growth in the province of Ontario is coming from our vibrant small and medium-sized businesses. The province has a whole host of initiatives and programs to assist this job-creating element in the economy. The small business kiosk program is one that serves the small business community

and entrepreneurs across the province. Could the minister tell the House more about this program?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): To the honourable member for Nepean, as you can see, we are very busy in my ministry. I'm happy to say, though, that we are offering small business kiosks to all MPPs for their ridings and their constituency offices.

I might say that the program is being coordinated by the member for Brampton North, Mr Joe Spina, who is the parliamentary assistant for small business. The teamwork that Mr Spina shows in my ministry is an example of how we use parliamentary assistants so well compared to other previous governments.

I might say that these kiosks are an inexpensive way—and a very useful thing—for business entrepreneurs to receive very good business information. First of all, they provide information on financing, small business seminars which are offered, business publications which are available, and how to register a business name, among other things.

I should mention that small and medium-sized businesses create the majority of jobs in Ontario, and that's why we want to help them do their business.

Mr Baird: The Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism also provides small business self-help centres as well. Could the minister tell this House if the kiosk program is necessary in addition to these very valuable centres to help create jobs in Ontario?

Hon Mr Saunderson: To the honourable member for Nepean, yes, we do have business self-help centres, and some of those are only available in major or medium-sized urban centres. So it's sometimes very expensive for those members to go and seek out the advice they need. The business kiosks are a good way for those who are a long distance from the self-help centres to go and get the information they need to start a business and run it successfully, or to get more help in running their businesses which are already in existence.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Good news, Minister. This morning, the Legislature chose in private members' hour to support my resolution, which referred to the fact that the former government had transferred \$60 million out of the heritage fund into the consolidated revenues of the province of Ontario. This morning, we managed through a three-party coalition to assemble 61 votes in favour of that resolution.

Could I have a commitment, seeing as we have the support of the House, for the Minister of Northern Development to inform the House when the \$60 million, with interest, will be placed in the heritage fund?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I think my colleague in the opposition is referring to the fact that last year, before the end of the fiscal year, the ONTC fund transferred \$60 million over to the consolidated revenue fund.

The fund, I believe, was set up to help northerners plan for the future and diversify their economy. We're re-examining the heritage fund's role in light of the auditor's comments last year and in light of the fact that we think the heritage fund has a vital role to play in northern Ontario in diversifying the economy and creating economic opportunity.

The money has been spent. I know we would all want to see it back. I can't give a date when it will be back. It was spent by the NDP, by its board. I can guarantee the House that we are going to start up the heritage fund in the near future with a reinvigorated board, with a new mandate and the money will be there to help the northerners.

1510

Mr Michael Brown: It wasn't the ONTC that lost the money, it was the heritage fund corporation. It was \$60 million. This morning the House voted to send \$60 million, with interest, back to the fund.

My supplementary, I guess, is probably even more critical. Besides the \$60 million plus interest, there is a \$30-million commitment to the heritage fund due April 1. Have those funds been transferred to the heritage fund and when are you going to get the heritage fund actually disbursing funds, doing things for northern people? When?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I apologize. Of course it's the heritage fund.

The second part of the question is, yes, the heritage fund will be up and running as soon as possible and the money will be there for the \$30 million, plus the money that has been accrued in the past. The \$60 million—I think everyone in this House would like to replace it. Unfortunately, it's been spent and it will take some time to recoup it. Under our agenda, we will get the economy going and we'll have the revenues to not only clean up the mess created by the NDP, but replace the money they took out of northern Ontario.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): In the absence of the Minister of Health, I have a question for the Deputy Premier. Your government has cut \$1.3 billion from Ontario's hospital budgets despite your election promise not to take one cent from health care. Despite musings by the Minister of Health that he has sealed the health care envelope at \$17.4 billion each fiscal year, community health care is suffering right now.

In my community, our hospitals have already done excellent work to amalgamate and create efficiencies in their budgets, but last night at a community meeting, further cuts were announced to deal with a \$3-million cut to Sault Ste Marie's hospitals. It's anticipated that the cumulative effect of these cuts will actually total \$5 million.

Deputy, will you commit, on behalf of the Minister of Health, that your government will review the \$3-million cut to our hospitals in Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I'm not able to commit anything on behalf of the Minister of Health,

but I can say to the honourable member that any efficiencies that are found in the health care system will be reinvested in the health care system and as a matter of fact, the Minister of Health has already made many reinvestments in the health care system. He will continue to do so as technology and programs come on stream and he has made a commitment that the health care envelope is \$17.4 billion. I think that when you hear the budget this spring, that indeed will be the case.

Mr Martin: That just doesn't cut it any more, because out there in the communities across this province, people are being hurt by the cuts your government is making. In my community of Sault Ste Marie, hospitals have already handed out 143 layoff notices. The Plummer and the General Hospital will have to reduce staff by 400 by the year 1998. This is going to have a very negative impact on local services.

At the community meeting last night, new cuts to services were announced. They included a reduction in the oncology program and a reduction in palliative care services. Dr Janice Willett of the academy of medicine in my community has told me: "We have definite evidence in Sault Ste Marie that the legislation and policies of this government has impacted negatively on local health care, with even more serious implications next year. There will be a local crisis."

What do you have to say to Dr Willett and the people of Sault Ste Marie about your government's commitment to preserve quality and access to health care? Will you commit to a review of the massive cuts in my community?

Hon Mr Eves: I reiterate the commitment that has been made by the Minister of Health with respect to the health care envelope at \$17.4 billion. Reductions that are given to hospitals in everybody's riding, including my own, those decisions are made by local hospitals as to how they will effect those reductions, but I can give the honourable member a few examples of reinvestment in the health care system by the Minister of Health to date: long-term-care reinvestment, \$170 million; expanded kidney dialysis services province-wide, \$25 million; restored out-of-country health care coverage, \$30 million; \$70-an-hour sessional fee for remote rural hospitals in the province of Ontario, \$13 million; cardiac surgery reinvestment, \$15 million; expansion of the Trillium drug program. I tell you that 140,000 hardworking, taxpaying, lower-income Ontarians you excluded from the Trillium drug plan, 140,000 of them, no thanks to you, now have drug coverage in the province of Ontario. And the list goes on and on.

COMPUTERS IN SCHOOLS

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, during a recent visit to a school in my riding, the Gregory A. Hogan school, I was approached by and on behalf of the students regarding the lack of access to computers in their school, and I discussed the matter with you. We have all heard about ministry initiatives like GEMS, OSAPAC and TIPP's. However, I want to know how and when the impact of these programs will be felt in the classrooms of the province.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): As I am sure the member is aware and all members of this chamber are aware, this government is very committed to closing the gap in information technology between "have" young people in this province and "have-not" young people in this province. There is a gap between those who have access to information technology and the worlds that information technology opens up and those who, unfortunately, still don't. That's why this government has committed in the short term to major investments in information technology in the classroom and why it will continue in the long term to make those investments and close that gap.

For instance, in the grant-eligible microcomputer systems program, or GEMS, the member referred to, our commitment has gone from \$20.6 million to \$36.4 million, and this is a program that allows for the purchase of computer technology for young people and for the training and development of their teachers. Our support of the Ontario software acquisition program advisory committee has gone from \$2.4 million to \$3.6 million.

Another area where we're very proud of our investment is in the technology incentive partnership programs, or TIPP's. Our government has received over 100 applications for this program. We are funding 40 of those initiatives that have been sent in to us, for a total of \$20 million in investment by this government in that program alone.

Mr Boushy: In addition to what the minister said, part of the idea of the technology incentive partnership program was to develop partnerships between local boards and businesses. What success has the minister had in involving business in TIPP's?

Hon Mr Snobelen: When the TIPP's program started, there was some question about how many initiatives might be sent in to the ministry, how many people would be interested in the program and technology and in moving technology forward in the classroom. I am pleased to announce again today that over 100 programs, great programs, were received by the ministry. Those programs of course had backing from and partnership with the private sector, which we think is critical to making technology available to our young people. While we thought there might be about \$12.4 million of private sector money invested in the TIPP's programs, in fact there is \$14.8 million. We have overexceeded the wildest estimates for this program.

1520

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you will know you have a lot of problems, so I'd just like to present one. In the riding of Essex South, the township of Gosfield South, for example, has some \$20 million worth of new development that remains unassessed. The town of Leamington estimates that there are 50 homes that have yet to be assessed. The town of Tilbury in the riding of Essex-Kent has \$90,000 approximately in tax revenue that dates back to 1993.

Minister, the assessment commissioner in Essex county has said his "30 assessors are bound to get behind trying

to keep up. Further," he said, "smaller stuff we tend to let go."

Minister, what are you doing about this problem?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): If the honourable member will be so kind as to send me the particular details I'd be more than happy to look into these specific instances in his area of the province.

I might say as a general statement that there's no doubt that the assessment system in the province of Ontario is broken. It is somewhat inequitable, somewhat unfair and this has happened over a period of a great number of years through all three political parties' governing days, I might add, and there's no doubt that it has to be addressed. The Minister of Municipal Affairs is doing exactly that.

Mr Crozier: I'll agree that the system is broken, but you've had eight months to at least look at it, to see what kind of solution you're going to bring to it, and the government has bragged on occasion that they had plans before coming into government.

Minister, the basic problem is that the methods, the time lines, the division of structure, need to be addressed. That's basically where the problem is. You continue to go on with the cumbersome process that you said you have. You continue to reduce staff. Morale is low. You have more chiefs than Indians. You also want to help municipalities who—

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: I'll withdraw that. I'll say you have more managers than workers, in that, when you have more managers than workers, you can't get the job done. You've got irate taxpayers who get dinged for two years' tax arrears once the property's assessed. I wrote to your ministry over a year ago and I suggested a solution to this: that there is lots of information out there that building officials have put together, that your ministry can use to solve the problem. There's a tax flow problem that you want to help municipalities—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question, please.

Mr Crozier:—education with. So why then, Mr Minister, can't you simply get on with the job, get the assessors out there—you get paid \$120 for each one—and get the job done?

Hon Mr Eves: I'd be pleased to receive the letter that the member sent to the previous Minister of Finance over a year ago and I'd be pleased to look at the solutions that he proposes in that. But I must say to the honourable member, I've said very directly that the assessment system is somewhat inequitable in the province. We will in due course take steps to address those inequities.

NATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the minister responsible for native affairs. The minister will know that the regional chief, Gord Peters, wrote a letter dated March 27 to the Premier which was circulated to all members regarding the presentation made by the minister the previous day to the chiefs of Ontario regarding the aboriginal policy framework of the government.

My question is, did the minister make clear to the chiefs at that meeting that he is cutting, according to the business plan of the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, all moneys for development of a government-to-government relationship, the statement of political relationship; and despite the rhetoric about economic self-reliance for aboriginal communities, the government intends to reduce capital spending on infrastructure in aboriginal communities from \$20 million to \$12 million over the next two years; that the government intends to reduce by 28% over two years operating grants to first nations? Did the minister make that clear, and what does that indicate about this government's commitment to economic diversification and self-reliance for aboriginal communities?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I indicated very clearly at the meeting we had dealing with the aboriginal policy framework that we would continue to discuss issues on the basis of being equals, nation to nation, and that respect and that policy would continue. I also indicated very clearly that as a result of the financial situation of this province, every program was being reviewed and every program would be evaluated. I also indicated very clearly that it was the policy of this government to look for ways to do better with less and in many areas we have to do that, because we have \$100 billion of debt, mostly as a result of the last five years of government by the NDP.

Quite simply, the aboriginal policy framework we set out was received well, and I was invited by a number of the first nations represented there and aboriginal leaders to join them in community events, to come and meet them in their communities. They were receptive. We had good discussions at that meeting. Yes, a couple of people may not have liked our aboriginal policy framework, but I can tell you that the individual first nation leaders were receptive to it. They've invited me to their communities to talk about economic development, to talk about self-reliance. I intend to take them up on those invitations, and I intend to proceed with a policy that has been sorely lacking in this province in the past.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of April 9, 1996. As members are aware, the House will not sit on Easter Monday, April 8.

On Tuesday, April 9, we will debate the motion of want of confidence standing in the name of Mr Wildman, the leader of the third party.

On Wednesday, April 10, we will have second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act.

For Thursday morning's private members' business, we will consider ballot item number 19, standing in the name of the member for Durham Centre, and ballot item number 20, standing in the name of the member for Yorkview. On Thursday afternoon, April 11, we will continue with second reading of Bill 34.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with the York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature to it.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition here from 47 people in Kapuskasing who have signed it.

"We, the seniors of the town of Kapuskasing, strongly support the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Local 639, of Kapuskasing, in a campaign to fight against the job cuts to be imposed by the Harris government. These services are very much needed in this community."

I have affixed my signature to the petition.

1530

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition here today signed by a number of residents from the city of Scarborough.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric beds, the special care nursery and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital, resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-efficient, quality care,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

"(1) Continue paediatric services, including inpatient paediatric beds,

"(2) Continue special care nursery services,

"(3) Continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care

"At Scarborough General Hospital!"

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is intent on reducing northern winter road maintenance services; and

"Whereas such downgrading places the lives of northern residents at undue and unnecessary risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow these reductions in service and to guarantee that winter roads across the northern regions of the province receive the necessary maintenance to ensure the safe passage of drivers."

I have affixed my name to that petition as well.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, people expressing their concern about cuts from Canada's national health care system. It says:

"Whereas proposed cuts in transfer payments pose a threat to Canada's national health care system; and

"Whereas, despite Mike Harris's promise on May 3, 1995, of 'no cuts to health care spending,' his November 29 economic statement contains '\$1.3 billion or 18% cuts to hospital spending over the next three years, and a further \$225-million cut from the health care budget;' and

"Whereas, despite Mike Harris's promise in the Common Sense Revolution that aid for seniors and disabled would not be cut, his November 29 economic statement shows cuts to the Ontario drug benefits plan and threatens access to drugs based on ability to pay; and

"Whereas the late Supreme Court Justice Emmett Hall, the father of Canada's medicare system, stated: 'The only thing more expensive than good health care is inadequate or no health care'; and

"Whereas Ontario residents enjoy a one-tier health care system for all, regardless of financial status, without copayments or user fees;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, call upon Premier Mike Harris and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain and protect the health care provisions presently provided to all Ontario residents."

I affix my signature to this petition. I expect there will be many more.

TAX REDUCTIONS

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the provincial debt and deficit are paid down."

I affix my signature.

ALZHEIMER RESPITE CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Niagara region has one of the highest per capita populations of seniors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Niagara region ranks 32nd out of 38 health regions in long-term-care funding and that more individuals wait for support services from the March of Dimes than those who are actually served by it; and

"Whereas Alzheimer patients who critically depend on support services in order to cope in a more humane way with this devastating illness continue to suffer from unacceptable delays in receiving respite care; and

"Whereas more than half of all Ontario families waiting for Alzheimer-related respite care reside in the Niagara area;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to adopt the plan by the Niagara Regional District Health Council which would help improve the way vulnerable people are treated in the Niagara area."

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with its contents.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): J'ai ici une pétition du monde de la région de Hamilton in regard to the question of rent control. It reads:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need of all humans; and

"Whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons; and

"As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario's tenants by ensuring that rent controls remain in effect in this province."

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition signed by approximately 100 residents of Kapuskasing, Hearst and the Cochrane area.

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have another petition on rent control from the good people of Niagara Falls-St Catharines and it reads:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants in Ontario;

"Although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I affix my signature to that petition.

Mr Bisson: This group of petitions is from the good people of Cornwall. By way of explanation, these people are again sending in petitions as they're concerned with the government's agenda on rent control. It reads:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need of all humans; and

"Whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly the desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent controls remain in effect in this province."

I will affix my signature to this petition as well.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TORONTO ISLANDS AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ÎLES DE TORONTO

Mr Leach moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Toronto Islands Residential Community Stewardship Act, 1993 / Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1993 sur l'administration de la zone résidentielle des îles de Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

ONTARIO HIGHWAY TRANSPORT BOARD
AND PUBLIC VEHICLES AMENDMENT ACT, 1996
LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA COMMISSION
DES TRANSPORTS ROUTIERS DE L'ONTARIO
ET LA LOI SUR LES VÉHICULES
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Mr Palladini moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 39, An Act to amend the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act and the Public Vehicles Act and to make consequential changes to certain other Acts / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission des transports routiers de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun et apportant des modifications corrélatives à certaines autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Do you wish to make any comments, Minister?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would just like to reiterate my earlier statement, that this is a move that's going to make opportunities for economic development in the province of Ontario.

OTTAWA CIVIC HOSPITAL ACT, 1996

Mr Patten moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr35, An Act respecting the Ottawa Civic Hospital.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

LOCKSMITHS LICENSING ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR LA DÉLIVRANCE
DE PERMIS DE SERRURIER

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 40, An Act to provide for the licensing of locksmiths / Projet de loi 40, Loi prévoyant la délivrance de permis de serrurier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Do you have any comments?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'd basically like to say that the purpose in the introduction of the Locksmiths Licensing Act, 1996, is to establish a system for persons engaged in or employed in the business of providing locksmith services. I would also like to mention that establishment of this particular piece of legislation will provide professional standards for locksmiths throughout Ontario. It will also provide a means of enhanced crime prevention awareness, and in the long term, I believe, it will provide lower insurance rates for residential homeowners and businesses in this province.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Before the

third order is called, Mr Speaker, I might indicate that the three parties have an agreement that if there is a division on this bill, a five-minute division bell is in agreement with everybody.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Agreed? Agreed.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF
TEACHERS ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR
L'ORDRE DES ENSEIGNANTES
ET DES ENSEIGNANTS DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 31, An Act to establish the Ontario College of Teachers and to make related amendments to certain statutes / Projet de loi 31, Loi créant l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications connexes à certaines lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Any further debate?

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training, I move to refer the bill to the standing committee on social development.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Snobelen has moved second reading of Bill 31. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1545 to 1550.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Grimmett, Bill	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Harnick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bassett, Isabel	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Bisson, Gilles	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Bob
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Boyd, Marion	Johnson, Bert	Saunderson, William
Brown, Jim	Johnson, David	Shea, Derwyn
Churley, Marilyn	Johnson, Ron	Silipo, Tony
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Skarica, Toni
Cooke, David S.	Laughren, Floyd	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Leach, Al	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Leadston, Gary L.	Stockwell, Chris
Doyle, Ed	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Martel, Shelley	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	Maves, Bart	Vankoughnet, Bill
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Villeneuve, Noble
Ford, Douglas B.	Murdoch, Bill	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Froese, Tom	Newman, Dan	Wildman, Bud
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Wood, Len
Gilchrist, Steve	Palladini, Al	Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Colle, Mike	McQuinty, Dalton	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	McLeod, Lyn	
Crozier, Bruce	Miclash, Frank	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 66; the nays 16.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Which committee?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Social development, please, Mr Speaker.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR L'OFFICE DE LA QUALITÉ
ET DE LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN ÉDUCATION

Mr Skarica, on behalf of Mr Snobelen, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to establish the Education Quality and Accountability Office and to amend the Education Act with respect to the Assessment of Academic Achievement / *Projet de loi 30, Loi créant l'Office de la qualité et de la responsabilité en éducation et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne l'évaluation du rendement scolaire.*

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I am pleased to table for second reading Bill 30, the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act. This legislation is part of the government's commitment to provide excellence and accountability in education for Ontario students and taxpayers. This initiative is just one of many our government has undertaken in its determination to develop an education system that is truly based on excellence, accountability and affordability.

We have, as you are aware, introduced reforms at the secondary school level to make secondary education more relevant to the needs of today's students and to the businesses that will be hiring them.

We have committed to establishing a demanding province-wide core curriculum and to setting high standards for student achievement across the elementary and secondary systems.

We are moving forward with the establishment of school councils to increase parent involvement in our schools.

We are moving forward with legislation to establish the Ontario College of Teachers, which will strengthen the position of the teaching profession and improve the quality of education in our province.

Our goal is to achieve a responsive and effective system in which taxpayers can see value for their investment and Ontario's young people can achieve excellence in their education. An independent, comprehensive testing program is a key element in this plan.

As the Minister of Education indicated on first reading of this bill, Bill 30 will establish the Education Quality

and Accountability Office as an arm's-length agency of government. The decision to establish a testing authority independent of the Ministry of Education and Training follows a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Learning and responds to public concerns regarding objectivity in the development of tests and the reporting of test results.

The mandate of the Education Quality and Accountability Office will be to evaluate the quality of elementary and secondary education in Ontario. A significant part of this mandate will involve the province-wide testing of students' academic achievement and the reporting of results of these tests to the minister and the general public.

The testing program meets the Common Sense Revolution's commitment to test the achievement of Ontario students on a regular basis. The program will be developed in conjunction with a demanding provincial curriculum setting high standards of achievement. It is a key component of the government's strategy for accountability and excellence in education.

Province-wide testing will be conducted in grade 3 in reading, writing and mathematics during the 1996-97 school year. This testing will be conducted each and every year after that. Sample testing in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 6 and 9 will also be conducted, starting with a grade 6 math test in 1996-97. All-student testing in grade 11 is planned to commence during the 1999-2000 school year, following the establishment of new secondary school graduation requirements.

The benefits of this testing program to the province will be considerable. For students, parents and teachers, the test result information will help to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and support appropriate improvements where needed. Test results will also provide important feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of their classroom programs and teaching practices. For the taxpayers who fund the system and for those who share responsibility for the quality of classroom education, the evaluations will strengthen accountability and identify the system's strong points. They will aid in priority-setting as well and will promote fiscal responsibility so that scarce resources can be directed to areas where improvements are most required. Reviews on alternative methods of assessing the performance of the education system will also be undertaken. Reports will follow, with recommendations to be made to me, or to the minister—

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): To you?

Mr Skarica: To the Minister of Education and Training—to me if you'd like, but the minister preferably—on ways to improve the system and promote best practices.

Ontario will have a cost-effective testing program that responds to public calls for a closer scrutiny and greater accountability in education. Through testing and reporting, we will provide our taxpayers with a clear, objective picture of how our education system and students are performing.

Through this legislation, our government is making a long-term investment that will lead to ongoing improvement of student performance and of the entire education system.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions? Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I wonder if I could ask unanimous consent from the House to share part of my time with the member for St Catharines.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed.

Mr Patten: Thank you. I am pleased to take part in the debate today on the establishment of the Education Quality and Accountability Office. I am pleased to see legislation come forward with respect to the issue of testing. I know the parents of students throughout Ontario have waited a long time and I'm sure they as well are pleased to see this come forward.

Ontario's educational system has to challenge and must challenge students to reach their highest possible level of achievement. In order to do this, we must be able to assess effectively the progress of students in the system and to assess the efficiency of the system itself and the system's capacity to teach students and to allow students to reach their maximum potential.

I believe these are the central issues not only in the debate that we begin today, but also among parents, teachers, students, trustees and the people in Ontario in general in respect to the full spectrum of education in Ontario, that being the quality and standard of education.

I recently met with Joan Green, chief executive officer of the Education Quality and Accountability Office, and Richard Johnston, a former colleague in this chamber who is a member of the office's advisory board. We had an excellent discussion and one in which they outlined to me their views and their goals for this new independent agency. Frankly, I was impressed. I was impressed with their commitment to professionalism, their commitment to maintaining a consistent standard of quality of education in Ontario.

Parents, students, representatives of business and labour and members of the community all have expressed their desire to have quality programs and instruction in Ontario today. Of course, everyone wants to ensure that our schools challenge students in a manner which allows them to reach their highest possible standards of achievement. The lack of consistent standards across the province has left the public concerned, has left many parents upset, students confused, and often teachers who are frustrated.

Without a mechanism to measure success, we are unable to assess whether our children are learning the basics in reading, writing and math. Students as well are concerned about their education and want to be part of attaining a quality education. That goes without saying. But as the Royal Commission on Learning stated: "Students told us that they are concerned about information; they want teachers to tell them clearly and promptly what they need to do in order to improve; they want fairness...common standards for assessment." This is a powerful display of commitment from students within the system and shows a fair degree of insight on their part.

Uniform educational standards must be set, students must be tested to see if they are meeting them, and the

results must be clearly reported and easy to understand. As well, we may be able to assess whether the whole educational system is meeting high standards.

Before I move to the specific concerns I have identified with this legislation, I want to share some observations on the value of testing and the significant role it can play in assessing and improving the educational system.

Many people view the current endeavour, the Education Quality and Accountability Office, as simply adding more testing. There is a whole other dimension on which, it seems to me, this must be viewed.

It is beneficial, and I believe a must, to have a comprehensive approach to the assessment process. I'm confident this is reflected in the mandate of the office in terms of its responsibility for managing the province's participation in national and international testing, in addition of course to its responsibility for assessment here in Ontario.

As I mentioned, I met with Joan Green and Richard Johnston, and we went over a number of useful items and materials that they shared with me. I'd like to share some of these ideas and thoughts with the members of the House today, because I believe this might help put in perspective what we seek to accomplish and what I believe is important to accomplish in assessing education.

I have a few quotations from an assessment specialist, whose name is Grant Wiggins, and I would like to share some of these with you:

"The etymology of the word 'assess' alerts us to this clinical, that is, client-centred" or student-centred "act. Assess is a form of the Latin verb *assidere*, to 'sit with.' In an assessment, one sits with the learner. It is something you do with and for the student, not something we do to the student.

"We have the tests we deserve because we are wont to reduce assessment to testing and to see testing as separate from learning—something you do expediently once, after the teaching is over, to see how students did, usually for other people's benefit" and not necessarily for the benefit of the student himself or herself.

I continue with Grant Wiggins's statement:

"The assessor tries to ferret out all of what the student knows and can do by various means. The tester, on the other hand, demands of the student specific responses to fixed questions of the tester's choosing. But the philosophical assumptions that permit the student to be treated as an object of the tester-experimenter are pre-modern. At the very least, assessment requires that we come to know the student in action. They stress repeatedly that the purpose of assessment is to assist and inform the learner.

"While a test in which the student responds to pre-fashioned answers tells us what the student 'knows,' it does not tell us whether the student is on the road to using knowledge wisely or effectively. Narrow, one-dimensional probes into a student's mines of stored information do not begin to get at how she learns or what she can do."

Or "In elementary and secondary education, a decision that will have a major impact on a test-taker should not automatically be made on the basis of a single test score."

I think what I've just referred to is highly relevant to the understanding of what we are attempting or what should be attempted to be accomplished in terms of

standardized testing. We are not analysing students as an isolated part of a project. We are attempting to create a testing system that is interactive, one in which we know as much about what goes in as we do about what comes out and how the two relate.

The full spectrum of student learning encompasses a constant process from assessment, to reporting, to improvement, to curriculum, to assessment and so on. Each of these stages performs a critical link in the learning continuum.

1610

These are references from what was shared with me by Richard Johnston and by Joan Green, and they see this as a continual recycling pattern of perpetual improvement in progress. I think the approach is excellent. At the assessment stage, student achievement is assessed in relation to standards. At the reporting stage, outcomes state general results expected and standards state accepted range of student achievement. At the improvement stage, results of assessment are used to improve programs and student achievement. At the curriculum stage, outcomes state general results expected and standards state accepted range of student achievement.

I'd like now to outline the areas within this legislation with which I have a few concerns. The areas are the gap in testing between grade 3 and grade 11, the need for uniform and flexible standards and provisions in this bill which override basic guarantees for the protection of privacy.

I have in the past expressed my concern to this House about the changes that have occurred in the testing program for the office due to the change in governments. We were to have testing that would occur in grades 3, 6, 9 and 11 when the office was first announced. However, the new government, attempting to put its stamp on educational reform in Ontario, changed the testing program of the office and reduced it to province-wide testing in grade 3 and grade 11 with, of course, some minor sample testing in between.

I'm concerned, and I have expressed this concern on several occasions, that we are missing a whole section of a student's life with this gap. These are, as we all know, formative years in the life of a young person, both in terms of social interaction and developing learning skills to boot. As young people grow and mature, their perception of who they are develops and changes. Students entering the system are to a significant degree different when they leave and they change continually during these years, some more than others, and some for better and unfortunately some for worse. It is the latter which we hope surely to catch along the way. Understanding what is occurring in a young person's life and how it is changing helps us to respond properly in providing the most adequate nature of supports. With this gap, however, I'm concerned that we may miss the opportunity to make the required improvements and adjustments at the appropriate time. The office must be cognizant of the social development aspects of these formative years. Similarly, I'm concerned that the gap misses a large part of a student's learning development, as education not only provides factual and statistical information to students but it also helps teachers and teaches them how

to research, analyse, synthesize and present information. Young people are developing the skills which will assist them to learn along the way and lead them to the next steps in their lifelong journey.

This is why it's so important that we know whether students are developing the necessary skills and whether the educational system is providing both the stimulus and the opportunity for these skills to be developed.

As I pointed out earlier, the testing program was reduced by this government, the budget for the office. In order to implement and to carry out its mandate—of course, that is affected by the budgetary cuts. With all of the other cuts occurring in the educational system, one is left with no other reason than economics as to why the budget for testing has been reduced. It certainly is not for pedagogical reasons. It is also curious that if the office is to reach a point where the marketing of its assessment products will cover the costs, as we are told, of the office's budget requirements, then why the reduction in the testing schedule? It's like telling a retailer to limit his or her products to sell.

The government, I suppose, might argue that the testing program has only been modified because there will be sample testing, but sample testing during this tumultuous seven-year period cannot replace comprehensive province-wide testing, and of course, sample testing is nothing new. It has been going on for a fair length of time. It goes on almost all the time. In fact, we recently had results of tests conducted for grade 9 students in the areas of writing and math. Nothing, however, replaces province-wide testing. It is unfortunate that the government has made this change. Like all the other changes that are being forced on the educational system by this government, educators and the educational system have no choice but to make do with the poor hand that this government is dealing.

I would like also to express my concern over the lack of uniform province-wide curriculum and the difficulties that this will pose to the testing that the office will undertake. At present there is not a uniform province-wide curriculum in the province. Teachers spend countless hours working with guidelines from the ministry on providing quality education programs. I will be extremely interested to see how the preliminary testing of grade 3 this fall will fare. It is noteworthy that the first real assessment out of the system will not be of student outcomes but rather it will be a test of how well the tests work, so the information should be quite fascinating.

It will also be interesting to see what impact this new testing regime will have on an educational system which is under considerable strain already. There will be adjustments during the implementation period that need, of course, to be considered. Not only do tests have to be developed and students tested, but there are also educators who are to be prepared, preparation from both a qualifications and capabilities standpoint, to administer the tests and to analyse the results. This will call for added skills and added time on the part of our Ontario teachers once again.

The assessment process, while it may be uniform, will also need to adopt the sensitivities that will take into consideration the nutritional needs of children, which we

know affect testing. We will also have to take into consideration the special needs of some students, such as those with learning disabilities or physical handicaps or those who face particular social development challenges. And these are being met by what? By inequities in the system due to the massive cuts to education instituted by this government. Cuts in educational funding will result in fewer teachers due to the expected layoffs. If we have fewer teachers, what does that mean? Fewer teachers mean larger class sizes. Larger class sizes mean less individual contact between student and teacher. Increased layoffs mean the loss of younger teachers from the educational system, and that's extremely worrisome. This group of teachers is a fundamental part of the educational system process of rejuvenation and constant renewal. This is what young teachers bring to a system. It will be damaged. The quality—

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Could the member for Ottawa Centre please take his seat.
1620

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The government talks about how important classroom education is and education is to the province. They haven't kept a quorum. I would like you to take a quorum call, please.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum in the House?

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Will the member for Ottawa Centre please continue.

Mr Patten: I am pleased to see the spontaneous interest in education by some of the members having come to join in and participate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, order. The member for Grey-Owen Sound, please take a seat or leave the chamber.

Mr Patten: Madam Speaker, I know the members do care about young teachers, which is where I left off when you sought to assure there was a quorum here.

As I was saying, the loss of young teachers will damage the system. The quality of education is diminished because of the ability of the educational system to grow and progress, because it cannot without rejuvenating itself or being in a state of renewal with such an important matter as education. The quality of education in Ontario will undoubtedly suffer. There is no way for this government to deny this. Their cuts have already hit, and will continue to hit, the classroom.

Having said that, I'm optimistic about the office and of the work it will produce. I'm optimistic in one sense because I'm certain this work will help to expose the negative impact of the government's educational cuts. I'm certain of this.

I also think we will soon find that the work of the office may very well help further demonstrate the value of early childhood education, again an area which this government is undermining, another classroom situation diminished.

According to Bill 30, the office has as its objectives, "To evaluate the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education," and, "To make recommendations, in its reports to the public and to the Minister of Education and Training, on any matters related to the quality or effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education or to the public accountability of boards."

These are laudable goals, and ones which I think will assist the office in playing a very important role. However, I must caution those who may at some time or another serve with the office to expect to feel frustrated in your efforts, from time to time, to fully address these goals.

Why do I say this? I say this because numerous studies have shown that early childhood education and early childhood learning give children a head start and improve their rate of success throughout their education and indeed on into the workplace. What have this government and this minister done with this information? It's been thrown into the trash can. Junior kindergarten is gone from many boards that heretofore operated junior kindergarten. We will pay for this down the line.

The minister is apt to respond that they won an election which gave them a mandate to implement a very clear policy on junior kindergarten. I take that as debatable. The government said it would make it a local option, but what the government did not say was that it planned to withdraw a significant proportion of provincial funding away from it, and these are the facts which make a local option no option at all for some school boards.

What about the valuable advice of educators and the views, I might add, of the parents of over 100,000 children who were enrolled in junior kindergarten this last September, or the thousands who want to send their kids to junior kindergarten but won't be able to because this government put a stranglehold on funding and put many junior kindergarten programs across Ontario down for the count?

The action taken by the minister last week in terms of his announcements for Bill 34, the areas in which school boards must cut, reduced figures for the general legislated grants—the implications go beyond the issue of "local option." His changes have an additional impact on the level of funding available for the provision of junior kindergarten, for example, and other programs such as adult education funded outside of category 1. It's like the cut that keeps cutting.

I simply caution members of the office not to get overly excited about your new ambitious role to advise the minister on the quality and effectiveness of some aspects of school education in Ontario.

I have another suggestion for those involved with the office: Don't be confused by the reforms to education in Ontario which are occurring during these times. Education reforms should be education reforms, not economic reforms. I suspect that you may run into this clash of economics versus quality of education continually. However, your independence as an office should enable you to be loyal to true education reforms that are related to quality of education.

We want to ensure that students and student achievement are paramount in our education system. That's the goal of the office, and I wish it were the goal of this government. Our education system is seen by most as the path to a brighter future. My colleagues and I in the Liberal caucus believe that change can be achieved from within our school system without compromising the ability of students to prepare for and compete in the new global economy.

We're all aware that the education system is complex and change that much more complex. It does not respond well to simple slash-and-burn solutions, nor does it respond well when reforms are dictated solely by economic considerations. However, if our education system does not provide the opportunity and respond to the changing knowledge and skill sets needed for today and for the future, our students will be left behind.

The goals of any reforms have to be the quality of learning for our children and young people in our schools; the quality of resources for teachers in the classroom; the learning tools; the pupil-teacher ratio; the programs inside and outside the classroom, not just extracurricular activities but the full spectrum of learning, the social development that takes place while young people are in school.

1630

I would like to share with the Legislature a portion of a presentation I received from a Mrs Carolyn Morrow. The presentation speaks to the issue of junior kindergarten and more broadly to the issue of educational cuts. She says:

"We should not be sacrificing the potential of our young people to the omnipotent objective of deficit cutting. Instead we should be fixing, not causing, inadequacies in our educational system. Don't let your decision about the future of junior kindergarten be determined by a larger social and education strategy that masquerades as fiscal common sense."

That puts it very clearly as to what is at stake and what is happening in education today.

Reforms should be driven by a desire to improve, to borrow a phrase, our "love of learning," not by an economic agenda that is based on the bottom line. When I see \$400 million, which will eventually translate into \$1 billion, taken away from elementary and secondary school education in Ontario and see the government devising plans to use that money to fund a \$5-billion tax rebate, I have no choice but to question the educational motives of this government.

Another area of concern I'd like to express is on Bill 30 and how it deals with the issue of freedom of information and the protection of privacy. It is similar to a concern which I shared with this House's attention on Bill 31. The concern here is with the access to personal information in the provisions of Bill 30, and it is that the proposed power to collect, use and disclose personal information may go beyond what is reasonably necessary to achieve the goal of the bill, thus leading to the erosion of privacy protections.

Similar concerns were expressed by the privacy commissioner, as everyone well knows, during the hearings on Bill 26. Subsequently, the government amended Bill

26 to address those concerns. The only limitation on the power to access and use personal information in the bill is that provided by the broadly drafted legislative objects. This is a weak limitation, as the list of objects is even less clearly defined than the goals of Bill 26, which, for example, had reducing the potential for health care fraud.

What is even more glaring in terms of Bill 30 compared to Bill 31 is that there is no confidentiality provision in Bill 30 requiring the office or its employees to maintain the confidentiality of information that it receives under the bill. A very general duty of secrecy exists under the provisions of the Public Service Act. This act requires employees to swear an oath of secrecy in respect of all matters that come to their knowledge by reason of being a civil servant. However, given the highly sensitive nature of personal information, and following the practice of other statutes, it would be reasonable to include a specific provision in Bill 30 imposing a duty of confidentiality.

I hope this was simply a drafting error on the part of the government, because if it wasn't one, I have to ask why and what was the intent with these sections found within the bill. The need for such a power has not been clearly established. Why, for example, would the office need to know a person's blood type or have a person's fingerprints? These are only some of the more questionable types of personal information with which I am sure by this time most of the members of the House are familiar, and there's a list of many, many categories that have been identified as worthy of privacy. This is under section 38 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The purpose of this act is to protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by institutions, and to provide them with access to such information. Subsection 38(2) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act states, "No person shall collect personal information on behalf of an institution unless the collection is expressly authorized by statute, used for the purposes of law enforcement or necessary to the proper administration of a lawfully authorized activity."

The last time I read the objects of Bill 30 it did not say anything about law enforcement, nor is it clear, as I pointed out, how the assembling of this information serves to meet the objects of the office. However, by putting this reference into the bill and also into Bill 31, the government has, it seems, effectively stripped away the protections placed around this information.

Currently, there is no similar provision in the statutes governing other self-governing bodies, such as under the Law Society Act or the Regulated Health Professions Act, and there is nothing in the Education Act requiring disclosure of personal information as is proposed with clause 4(1)(b) and subsection 9(6) of Bill 30. Other statutes provide a similar, though more constrained, right of access to personal information; for example, in the Family Support Plan Act. This allows the director, for the purpose of enforcing, and I quote from the act, "a support or custody order to obtain personal information from other institutions."

Likewise, under the Workers' Compensation Act subsection 65(3) gives the board the power, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, for the purpose of administering the act, to enter into agreements with other institutions to allow and give access to information held by the institution. However, as I have stated, the need for such a power has not been, to my mind, clearly established, and it begs the question as to why these sections are part of Bill 30 and why there is in either case no confidentiality provision along with it.

There are other past examples where legislation was amended after the office of the privacy commissioner made its views known, and I hope that we will have the views of the privacy commissioner on this legislation and that in committee we can see adequate changes made to ensure that the privacy of individuals is indeed protected.

These are some of the concerns that I have. I see, at this particular time with this particular piece of legislation, the goal of the office is to seek to identify areas of our educational system which need improvement and to reassure parents, students and all of those who have an interest in the educational community that the system is meeting the highest possible standards. This will be accomplished by an effective, comprehensive assessment system, not simply more tests. Curriculum, teachers, students in the learning environment are important components of an effective educational process. But we need to be able to assess the impact of all of these variables not simply for a single student's progress in isolation of what is happening around him or her, but that tells parents, teachers or students what they need to know.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time to participate in the opening of the exploration debate on Bill 30. I look forward to the government addressing the concerns that I have outlined in my remarks and that I believe and hope will improve the product.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate this afternoon on yet another education bill which is of some interest to people. I don't know how high a priority it should be at this time in education. I'm wondering how we can afford this particular office when we're having a tax cut in Ontario of 30%, most of which will go to the richest people in the province, and yet we're going to have some millions of dollars to spend on this particular office, which of course represents yet another bureaucracy. I know that many in the government caucus are opposed to bureaucracy which is unnecessary.

However, I think there is sufficient demand out there that there be some accountability. I don't say that the government is wrong for at least looking at how we can best make our system most accountable to people. I know that the NDP set up the commission, and one of the recommendations—fairly strong recommendations—was in favour of some kind of legislation in this direction.

But I look out and see that there's a tax cut that is supposed to be coming and we're seeing all the cuts in other areas. When we see the cuts, when we see teachers—these are front-line people we're talking about; these are people who are actually in the classroom; these are the teaching assistants who assist particularly with those children who have special needs. Keeping in mind

now that many who were in special education and segregated in years gone by have now been integrated into the regular classroom, therefore there is a need for additional people to assist with those who have these very special needs, and yet we're going to see cuts in that area.

1640

We're going to see an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio in the classrooms. I know there are teachers who would say: "I taught 20 years ago. I had 40 students in the classroom and it didn't bother me." You had 40 different students in those days. We had a society which was more stable in terms of family life. We had a different society in terms of the level of tolerance of people within that society. Therefore, the challenge is much greater today. To say that it would be equally okay today to have 40 students in a classroom is not acceptable.

I notice in my own community almost daily there are signs that there are cuts in education. I saw a headline the other day in the newspaper that said that a school in north St Catharines, Eden school, which is located on Scott Street, is going to be losing teachers. I know other schools in the area are going to be losing teachers. This is going to have an effect on the front line of education, in my view.

There are also other support staff who are very important to the whole learning situation. You have secretarial staff who will be diminished in number at the very time when governments are demanding more paperwork and more accountability from those in the teaching profession. You have maintenance and cleaning staff who are being lost. You have transportation being lost, particularly to those students in the rural areas who, if they want to participate after hours in extracurricular activities or in sporting activities, which are also extracurricular, are going to have to find their own way home. If they have the wherewithal to do it, I guess they can do it, and if they don't, they're out of luck.

Here we are establishing this particular entity in government at the very time we're doing those other things. We all know that with the tax cut that the ideology of the government is calling for at the present time, this is a tax cut that will require that the Ontario government borrow more than an additional \$20 billion, add that amount to the provincial debt, to finance this tax break that will largely help the people who are the most wealthy in the province. At the same time we're doing this, we have to cut back in other areas. We are spending money, however, in this testing and accountability office.

We know as well with the tax break that what it does is it forces local boards of education and municipalities to impose the most regressive kinds of taxes, those taxes being an increase in the property taxes or the user fees, which do not take into account a person's ability to pay.

The member for Dufferin-Peel rose in the House the other day to ask a question of the Minister of Education, when the heat was obviously on, about charging for busing. The board of education was simply responding to the fact that they were having their transfer payments for the purposes of transportation cut considerably. They said the only way they could continue to meet that service would be to have a cut in the transportation grant.

It's a great game that the government plays these days: You put the cat among the pigeons wherever you can and distract attention from the government. I prefer the game of pin the tail on the donkey: You pin the tail on those who are ultimately responsible for the problems that are created. In this particular case, when the government does not transfer those funds, when the government worships at the idol of a tax cut to benefit largely the richest people in our society and borrows over \$20 billion to do it, when the government does that, it then is in a position where it has to say to local boards of education, "You're not going to have as much money to deal with."

In Metropolitan Toronto—I see many of the Metropolitan Toronto members here—we now have the provincial government, through the auspices of the Minister of Education, taking money away from property owners. You could say, "In the Niagara Peninsula, why don't you cheer for that?" You know you could say that. I'm a member from the Niagara Peninsula, why don't I cheer for that? But I know the members from Scarborough and the members from Etobicoke, members from Toronto are all saying, "How is this fair to take the property tax, which is for local purposes, and give it to other places in the province?"

We understand fully if you take the income tax and spread that around the province. We understand if you take away the tax which is for sales purposes. People say: "I understand that. That should be spread around the province." And, again, if there are other kinds of taxes and fees, people understand it.

But I can't believe that the member for Scarborough East, for instance, isn't highly exercised by the fact that his Minister of Education, his cabinet, are reaching their paws into the local property tax and taking that property tax away to go somewhere else. The Metropolitan Toronto members will say: "Is this a fair precedent? Is this what we want to do, go into the property tax?" And the municipal politicians here in this House know what I'm talking about. The people who have served municipally know exactly what I'm talking about, where you reach into the property taxes and start taking that money and spreading it around the province.

To me, that is setting a bad precedent. It seems to me, in the province of Alberta, there was a court case on that, and the government lost that particular court case.

I know within the Conservative caucus, there must be some rather interesting discussions taking place on this issue. I don't have a pipeline into it.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, for some reason says, am I jealous of this going on? Well, not really. I'm not really in that position, because I would be highly exercised by the fact that my own government would be taking property taxes from my area and giving it to somebody else in the province.

I understand the other taxes. That's the way it is established and that's understandable, but not the property tax. I would think the Minister of Municipal Affairs, for instance—I don't expect him to rise in the House and agree with me—is highly concerned about this particular matter if he were allowed to break the confidence of cabinet and bring this matter forward. I will say that on

his behalf, and on behalf of my friends in the government caucus.

At the same time, of course, that you're spending money on this and having this tax cut that you worship at, you are eliminating junior kindergarten in various parts of the province. Daily now, we see junior kindergarten being eliminated. Despite the statistics out there, despite the independent studies which show that in the long run you're going to pay dearly for doing so, you're going to eliminate it, because somebody thinks this is glorified babysitting. That's a concept that, from a distance, people may have. I assure you, this is, if you look at independent studies, bright, thoughtful people from around the world—I know the government worries that they might be left-wing people, but these are right-wing people as well as left-wing people who look out and say, "What are the long-term consequences?" The long-term consequences, I assure you, are not good for society, and there are studies which will quantify that many times over.

I want to say as well that there's going to be total confusion within the system as you try to eliminate grade 13. At the same time all of these changes are hitting the school system, you are diminishing the number of teachers, diminishing the number of personnel to deal with these, and you're going to have utter chaos in the schools at what you're doing.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I'm asked, what is the alternative? I would not proceed. As the member for Wellington says, "The tax cut is reckless." As the member for Grey-Owen Sound, the member for Etobicoke West, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and others within the caucus who have yet to be identified say, "Let's not proceed with the tax cut when we don't have the money to do it." That's how they would say that.

1650

The letter that went to the Premier of this province from my friend Ted Arnott, the member for Wellington, who wants to be reasonable, said at this point in time, looking at all the books now that they have seen them, evaluating the current circumstances as governments must do as they come into power, "I think it's a reckless tax, Premier, and I'm writing you a letter to say so." I agree with him and I agree with the other three members of the caucus who have publicly been identified as saying, "Looking at the present circumstances, we don't think you should proceed with that tax cut." When you ask me how we can avoid this problem, I say you don't proceed with the tax cut.

Another problem we have is that the grant information hasn't been forthcoming yet to the boards of education. In Lincoln county we have a job action, a work-to-rule action taking place within our secondary schools. This is not something that anyone looks forward to. The trustees and the board of education are not happy about it, the teachers are not happy that there's a work-to-rule situation going on, the parents most assuredly are not and the students who are directly affected are not because this affects extracurricular activities.

What's happened is that you have teachers and a board who don't know exactly what the province is going to do

in terms of transfers. Here we are into April already and no board of education knows the exact amount of money that will be forthcoming. Their fiscal year starts January 1; they don't start March 31 or April 1. When you try to get negotiations going under these conditions, nobody knows how much money there is going to be or how that money can be spent. So you have a deadlock on and as a result you have job action taking place that can take the form of either work-to-rule or a strike.

All of us hope these matters can be resolved through mutual negotiations, through a collective agreement. That's what everybody would seek. It's difficult to do that when this government is announcing one kind of toolbox one month, coming out with a different kind of toolbox the next month and refusing to tell the boards of education how much money will be transferred in this fiscal year. That presents a problem.

Then yesterday we had the College of Teachers being presented for consideration in this House. Again one looks and says, "Why are you bothering with that particular piece of legislation when there are more compelling issues?" I don't know this for sure, but the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, who sits in the back corner of the Conservative caucus at this time and I'm sure will be moving up some day, would be a person who would be concerned.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): He's on the far left of the caucus.

Mr Bradley: He's on my far right, on the caucus's far left.

I'm sure he would be in favour of appropriate discipline in our school system. I want to tell him that the College of Teachers is going to erode that considerably. Mark my words. You will all know at the end of this what that does to erode the discipline system in the school. Just watch and see.

I know you think you're getting the teachers. I know you think, "Oh, we'll fix them; we'll put them all in this College of Teachers and we'll make sure that everybody's fine." But you watch and see what happens when all the buttinskys start going in and saying this and that and we have people from left field and right field coming into the school system and saying you have students who are, I'm afraid, causing some problem in the school system, and this person or that person gets up and says, "I do not agree." So Mr Bradley comes to the school system and says to Mr Froese, who's a teacher, "I'm sorry, Mr Froese, but Mr Bradley disagrees with the way you have exercised discipline. Therefore, I think I'll go to the College of Teachers and complain about that." I'm sure if a Bradley came in to see Mr Froese and said he was going to the College of Teachers, my friend Mr Froese would say, "I don't think that's a good idea." I know in his heart of hearts my friend the member for St Catharines-Brock, and other members of the Conservative caucus—Mr O'Toole I'm sure would feel this way, for sure—all the members of the Conservative caucus would say, "I'm very concerned that this could erode discipline within the schools."

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I'm sure Mr Johnson, the member for Perth, would be very concerned about that as well. The

whole caucus would be. I like mentioning the names because the constituents back home are then aware that they're in the Legislature this afternoon.

Mr Colle: Late on Thursday. There are a few more. We've got names here.

Mr Bradley: Late on Thursday afternoon, I want to commend them for all being here today, including the member for Wentworth East, my good friend. Anyway, that isn't exactly what this bill has anything to do about, so I have to worry about that. However, this does allow us a little bit of a chance, a little leeway, because we're talking about education.

I was worried as well, as I know the members for Scarborough would be, about the principal from Scarborough who was being intimidated by the Minister of Education's office. That was very, very true that this was happening. There were calls coming from the minister's office to the principal of the school saying, "Don't you be critical of what this government is doing." I become worried when I hear of people acting on behalf of ministers who are doing that. I'm informed by very good sources that this indeed was happening. But I'll leave that one for another day.

On this bill itself, I think most people in the province would like to know that there is accountability. It's always been difficult to find the best way of doing this. Probably the best way, if it worked as it should, is within the school system itself. Lincoln county, for instance, would have its testing system using provincial standards and provincial norms and administer it that way.

I suspect this bill is dealing as much with perception as it is with reality. There's a perception that there is a problem and indeed there is some need for that accountability. Everybody agrees. We agree with that. I'm sure the NDP agrees with that. But whether establishing this office is going to accomplish that or not with the millions of dollars that are spent, boy, that remains to be seen. I really hope it does work. I'm not convinced that it would be a priority I would look forward to, although again there's a perception that there is a different kind of accountability from one board of education to the next. So some kind of provincial norms I think most people in this province want to see.

In education today, if I were looking at where the priorities should be, I think it's the appropriate funding of education—extremely important. All of these business people—I mentioned Davos, for instance, where the Premier was in January to discuss at this—is it a think tank? It's a think tank or something, economic think tank—

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): Economic forum.

Mr Bradley:—economic forum, the minister tells me, that takes place in Davos. There, I know, one of the things that they stressed to the people assembled was how important it was to have a good education system, a solid education system, out there that would produce people who would be able to compete, because competition's important in the international atmosphere we're in today in terms of trade, but also good citizenship and a general well-rounded education, and that those countries that have good education systems, students with lots of opportunities, are those countries which are most successful in

terms of competing and most successful in terms of the quality of life within those societies.

I want to give an opportunity for some other members to be able to speak this afternoon. I know that I have on the clock much more time, but being as magnanimous as I am I tried to mention as many of the members as I could. Minister Johnson is here this afternoon, I want to say, right in the front row, and the member for Hamilton Mountain. They're all here this afternoon—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: And the member for Oakwood, but we're not supposed to mention who's not here. But I hope that all of you who have listened with such attentiveness this afternoon will go back to the cabinet, will review the priorities which you have and will ask them to bring forward legislation which is genuinely going to help this province and will listen to the—Mr DeFaria has put his name forward to be stated he was here. The member for Kitchener-Wilmot and the member for Mississauga East, because we're not supposed to give names, are both here this afternoon, and I have their legislative cards right here. If anyone wants to know where to call for information, I will certainly provide it. I will not give the number, because I know what that can prompt.

I wish you all well on the Easter weekend, and I look forward to seeing you back here next week when I will certainly be happy to share with you a few more thoughts about matters of interest to all.

1700

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 30 and to recognize the member for St Catharines for his embellishment of all those people that are present here today. Further, I'd like to comment on the comments made by the member for Ottawa Centre.

Generally, I'm surprised the Liberal Party seemed to be optimistic about the establishment of this office, and I really think that's important to establish that. I heard one member clearly state that he was optimistic about the Education Quality and Accountability Office.

I just want to make a couple of comments quickly in the two minutes allocated. Testing outcomes based on learning: I think that's an important demand, for the people today in Ontario have been asking, how do we measure up? When we say, how do we measure up, I think we're really talking about the students. It's student-focused and it's outcome-focused, but more importantly, parents today, when I was going door to door in Durham East, were asking, how are our students doing? They're reading misleading reports in the newspaper, in the press, but most importantly, teachers themselves are demanding, and as we move towards the discussion of Bill 31 of yesterday, the professionalization of the teaching profession, they themselves want to be credited for the success of those outcomes. I believe that students today demand to be treated fairly, and they demand to be treated to fairness in education and to be prepared for their education.

I want to make one more point on the member for St Catharines—his biggest hangup seemed to be with the tax cuts. I just want to draw his attention to an article in the

Star this morning from the Canadian independent business group—

Mr Colle: The Star?

Mr O'Toole: I read it because it's a balanced approach. Anyway, they said they'd create 80,000 jobs with the tax cuts, and so let's focus on the outcomes of our plan to create more jobs and jobs that children have the education to accomplish.

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up, the member for Durham East. Further questions or comments?

Mr Colle: I think the member for St Catharines very eloquently said that the real key issue in education now is funding for education and funding for classroom education. I think there's a lot of anxiety out there in the public domain about how we fund education. I think this government is really treading into a very dangerous area. They are now going to get into an area of clawbacks from the property tax and then bring it back to the provincial treasury. I know this is going to be targeted in Toronto and Ottawa, but I think this sets a very dangerous precedent.

It's going to create more anxiety and more frustration from taxpayers who feel that they pay more than enough for basic services, and they in fact in Toronto, as you know, pay 100% of education through property tax, and for this government now to come along and propose that they're going to venture into locally raised taxes and bring that back into the provincial treasury, to do with what I don't know, is going to create a lot more stress and a lot more anxiety among people who pay for education. I think that pressure is going to create a very negative feeling about the way education is funded in this province and the direction this government is going in.

I would think all of these measures and bills you're introducing about accountability or teachers' colleges etc are not going to be of any value unless this government retreats from this new principle they're introducing of taxation without representation. Imposing a surtax on top of the property tax in the cities of Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa. You start doing that, you're going to see a tax revolt like you've never seen before in Toronto. If you continue on this path, it will be a path of destruction in terms of public feeling for education funding.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I appreciate the opportunity to just say a couple of quick words in rebuttal to what was said by the member for St Catharines and nicely segued into by the member for Oakwood. Part of what is continually lost in debate in this House appears to be, at least from the other side, the perspective of what is really in the bills that are being debated. Contrary to what has been said in the spokes-piece for the Liberal Party, the Toronto Star, there is nothing in the bill that talks about \$16 million or \$65 million in clawbacks; in fact, there's nothing in the bill that suggests there be any clawbacks. It merely facilitates the ability to do that.

But let's deal with the issue of pooling, because that was a great concern to the member for St Catharines. You tried to make reference that the people in Scarborough would be upset. As it stands right now, there is pooling. The city of Scarborough taxpayers remit \$350 million a year towards the Metro Toronto school board

budget, but they get \$525 million back. We pay 16% of the cost of education within all of Metro Toronto, but we get 24% of the budget. So let me get this straight. The member for Oakwood, I guess, is suggesting that the taxpayers in the other parts of Metro don't have a problem transferring \$175 million into the city of Scarborough, but somehow it would be inappropriate to look at pooling across a broader range of municipalities.

Let's make one thing perfectly clear. The intent—

Mr Bradley: Property tax, you are talking about.

Mr Gilchrist: That's what we're talking about. Of the property taxes from the rest of Metro, \$175 million winds up in Scarborough to augment their budget.

Let's get one thing perfectly clear. The intent of pooling within Metro and, if it ever is ramped out, anywhere else in this province is to ensure the same quality of education for every student in this province: no second-class citizens, no second-class students. We're going to guarantee that everyone gets a world-class, top-quality education regardless of the assessment base of their community.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further questions or comments? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr Patten: I have been enticed to add a few comments of my own, one, by the magnanimous nature of the member for St Catharines in wishing everyone a fine Easter weekend, and I would like to do the same.

My colleague from Oakwood having responded to some of the remarks from the member for St Catharines in terms of the possible usage of property tax, you will know that in my area this is an issue in Ottawa with the Ottawa Board of Education. I'm led to believe—I know the government is treading carefully, kind of creeping up on this somewhat, and the minister has not declared outright that this will be used, because we have advice that suggests there's a constitutionality issue that's at stake with this in terms of tax money that is directed at one level and taken by another jurisdiction for general revenue or whatever purposes. So it's a big concern.

It's a concern not only with people in education, but I've received representations and motions and resolutions from the Ottawa-Carleton regional council as well as the city council. If that precedent is set, you can imagine the insecurity of municipalities in terms of feeling, if the senior provincial government can move in and take the taxation funds that are directed for specific purposes by virtue of authority, what kind of bedlam we would have in this particular province.

I believe the member for St Catharines has identified a few issues related to the accountability office, and my time has run out, so I shall sit down and allow him to comment.

The Acting Speaker: I'm afraid to have to say that technically, member for Ottawa Centre, you couldn't do what you just did—

Interjection: That's a response.

The Acting Speaker: —but we'll take that as your response and we'll move on now. It was a fine response. It sure was. The member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: I came into the House to debate Bill 30, but I came in to a debate on Bill 34. Madam Speaker, I ask the unanimous consent of the House to be able to share my time with my colleague from London Centre.

1710

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Wildman: So I guess we are on Bill 30. I listened very carefully to the comments of my friend from Scarborough East. If I could speak just briefly about that before I get into my comments on Bill 30, I thought his analysis was rather interesting in that he argued that the ratepayers of Scarborough pay less to the Metro board than they actually get in terms of share of the total educational services delivered in Metropolitan Toronto, and that in a sense was pooling within Metro. If people were prepared to accept pooling within Metro, it should not be too onerous or too great a leap for them to accept a similar arrangement beyond Metro. Coming from an assessment-poor area of the province, I have some sympathy with the view that we should be encouraging and doing everything possible to provide the resources required by all boards to provide equal opportunity in education for all students in the province. I accept that as a good principle.

My concern, though, is this: In the way it is worded in the other bill that we are not debating, while there is no time limit on this and if this is at the beginning of pooling, there's nothing in the legislation that says the money that will come from the property taxpayers of Ottawa and Metropolitan Toronto to the provincial treasury will actually go just to education in other parts of the province. Since it goes into the consolidated revenue fund, it could conceivably be used or be part of spending in other areas, such as health care, for instance, or even fixing some potholes in roads or whatever. That is a bit of a problem that I think the member for Scarborough East should address.

But since he has said this is the beginning of pooling, then I would hold him to that and want to ensure that the provincial government is looking at province-wide pooling and this is some sort of intermediary step to moving in that direction and to ensuring that rural areas and northern areas of the province will benefit because more assessment-wealthy parts of the province such as Toronto and Ottawa are going to contribute to the educational opportunities in other parts of the province. I really would want to ensure that it was going to benefit education specifically, as opposed to other services that are needed and are important, but perhaps should be funded another way.

Now to Bill 30, the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act: We are in support of this legislation. As you know, the previous government began the work that led to the development of this legislation, and we believe there must be ways of ensuring that there is quality education across Ontario, and we are in favour of testing.

To have an office that will evaluate the quality of elementary and secondary school education and make reports to the Minister of Education and Training and to the public I think is a good thing. I think it's important that we be able to ensure that the quality of education provided across Ontario is properly evaluated so teachers, trustees, supervisory officers, parents, students and the general public will have some way of knowing how well we are doing in providing for the education of young people throughout Ontario.

We support the idea that the office could enter into agreements with boards and schools, private schools even, to test students in those schools as well as the public and separate systems across the province.

We should be very careful, though, in determining why we are doing testing, what the purpose is. If we're going to have province-wide testing of pupils to look at their academic achievements, the purpose is to be able to determine whether we are doing well in mathematics, language skills, other types of analytical skills important in preparing young people to make their way in the world and to contribute to their own wellbeing and to the benefit of society.

We are not producing province-wide testing to be able to make comparisons between schools and between boards in the province. We've got to be careful on this. If the purpose of province-wide testing is to have one board be able to say, "We did better than the other board in our area," or "We did better than most of the boards in the province and therefore we're doing a much better job," that may not be a valid conclusion. It's even more difficult when you start comparing one school to the other. The purpose of this is not to develop some kind of smorgasbord approach for parents or students to choose which school they want to go to based on the achievements in each school as compared to others, because that would be detrimental to the overall system.

Obviously, the purpose of testing should be not only to evaluate how well we are doing but also to point to where there needs to be improvement, but not to pit one school off against another or one board against another throughout the province. At least I hope that's not what's being proposed here. What we are hoping to do is to find out what's working and what isn't working so well, how we can improve the overall quality of education and ensure that boards are accountable for improvements where they are needed and where it is identified that they should proceed.

There is one concern that has been raised with me about this legislation by the teaching profession, and that is in clause 4(1)(b). Section 4 says:

"(1) Without limiting the powers or capacities of the office, for the purpose of carrying out its objects, the office may...

"(b) require a board to provide information to the office, including personal information within the meaning of section 38 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and section 28 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act."

If we're looking at evaluating the quality of education and looking for ways to improve the delivery of education, the development of programs that will ensure we are able to develop the skills young people need to compete in the work world and to have wider horizons and understand and comprehend what's going on around them and solve problems and so on, what kind of personal information would we need? I don't quite understand the purpose of this clause, and the issue has been raised with me by members of the teaching profession because they don't understand it either.

Are we talking about personal information about students? If so, what kind of personal information? Are

we talking about personal information about teachers or supervisory staff? If so, what kind of personal information? I don't know what this might entail. I hope the parliamentary assistant will be able to explain this to me when I sit down and he gets up and makes comments on my remarks, because I don't understand this. Personal information might mean gender information, I guess. It might mean race or ethnic group of students, or I suppose of teachers too. I would be concerned if that's what's intended here, because surely that's not the purpose of this legislation. I hope you can provide me with an explanation. I raise that not to be partisan or in some way cute. I genuinely don't understand the purpose of that clause and I would like to have an explanation.

1720

In regard to the whole issue of comparisons, as testing has been done in the past in the province—we increased the number of tests and the levels at which students would be tested throughout their school careers—inevitably the press has used this for the purposes I indicated earlier it shouldn't be used for. Inevitably the press says, "This local board placed this well in comparison to other boards in the province in this area," such as mathematics or language skills or whatever. They even go further and say, "This school placed in such-and-such a place compared to other schools."

I don't think that's the purpose, and I hope the parliamentary assistant will explain to me that's not the purpose of this but rather that it's to look at the overall system and ways we should be looking at to improve it. I hope it would mean the Minister of Education and Training will be able to issue directives and establish policies that will make it possible for us to improve the ways we evaluate the quality of education and to make recommendations and changes that will make it possible for us to deliver education more successfully and to ensure that we have students achieving as best they can throughout the province.

It's been suggested that the aim of all of us should be ensuring that every student in the province, no matter where she or he lives, has the same educational opportunity. I support that, and I know all members of the House would support that aim. But let's be realistic. Small, rural communities with widely dispersed populations and lower assessment bases will find it far more difficult to provide some of the services and facilities, some of the educational programs, some of the educational opportunities taken for granted in larger centres. I know that's what the grant system is supposed to address. The grant formulas are established in such a way to compensate for the different levels of assessment, for the different levels of property tax.

I'm certainly not blaming anybody. I think all parties when in government have faced this problem. All of us recognize that the property tax system, the assessment system, is very complex and it has very serious problems. The more complex it is, the more complex becomes the grant system and the formula for trying to compensate for the differences in capacity of local boards to tax.

It has been difficult for governments of all political stripes to deal with this problem because as soon as you try to deal with the assessment difficulties in one area, it

has ramifications for the neighbouring area. It may mean, obviously, that some people who have been perhaps overtaxed in the past will find their taxes go down, and others will find their taxes go up. The people, for some reason, who find their taxes go up, don't like it and say: "We don't want this. Forget it. We're not interested." So, in most cases, governments say: "Maybe we shouldn't open this can of worms. Let's not get involved."

Even though we have a grant system that is supposed to compensate for the different capacities of boards to tax—and it is complex—it doesn't adequately compensate. There are programs that are run that are very needed and important in Metropolitan Toronto, in Ottawa and in other urban centres that aren't even dreamed of in smaller communities, in rural parts of the province and in northern Ontario.

In evaluating the quality of education across the province, when looking at the raw numbers as a result of the test, surely we have to also look into how those results are related to the ability of the local board to provide the services that are required. That's why I think it's unfair and not proper for us to be making comparisons on the basis of the test. Rather, we should be looking at the overall results and determining what Ontario is doing right, what Ontario could be doing better and then moving to ensure that policies are implemented across the province that enable us to do better. That may mean there will have to be more financial assistance given to some parts of the province.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): The testing will tell you that.

Mr Wildman: Yes, and the testing hopefully will tell you that. But it shouldn't be done in such a way that we simply say, "Okay, Carleton board is much better than the Ottawa board," or vice versa, as a result of the tests. It's not the purpose of the tests to see whether the superintendent of education or the director of education at Carleton is doing a better job than the director of education in Ottawa. That's not the point. The point is, what is Carleton doing right and what is Ottawa doing right, and what can both of them do to improve the overall results? I'm not pointing to those two boards for any particular reason, I'm just using them as examples.

I support testing. I hope the government would test at the kind of levels we suggested when we were in government, rather than the cutback this government has proposed in terms of the testing. I think it should be tested at those levels we proposed rather than the cutback that we expressed—that we've seen with this government because of the \$16 million, I think it was, cut in the testing funding that the government announced—

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): What did you recommend?

Mr Wildman: Grades 3, 6, 9, 11.

I support the legislation. I would hope the parliamentary assistant could give me an explanation of what the personal information is that might be required under this bill for the office, because I really don't understand that part. I hope all members of the House would agree that we should be doing everything possible to ensure that we properly evaluate the success of our education program for students in the province and that we also ensure that

boards are accountable for making improvements where it is identified that they should be made.

With that, I will defer to my friend the member for London Centre. Because of the weather, which is more like Christmas than Easter, I may not get home this evening, so I would be prepared to debate much longer, but I know that other members will be going home for the weekend. I hope you all have a happy Easter.

1730

Mrs Boyd: It's a great pleasure for me to be able to talk about this bill because the whole issue around evaluation in education is one that's very close to my heart. When I first came into government and was Minister of Education, this was a very hot public topic because the various provinces had entered into an agreement to develop testing on a nationwide basis.

We were concerned, as a province, about the way in which the Alberta government, which had been designated as the lead in this, was developing tests, because we believed very strongly that the kind of methodology they were proposing would be extremely prejudicial to students in a very diverse place like Ontario. We had a very lengthy discussion with our federal and provincial colleagues about the need to ensure that the methodology used in developing educational testing took into account some of those variables and we worked very hard to develop the criteria for those tests that would meet the best interests of Ontario's students.

We were successful in persuading our partners to really look at some of the issues that had been raised about the type of testing, the way in which questions were asked and the kinds of concerns that could be raised, such as those raised by my colleague the member for Algoma about the use to which those tests would be put. We came to an agreement, I think, in the course of that discussion, which was very public and in which many parents participated, about the real need for us to evaluate the outcomes of the education system, that we needed to be very clear that those outcomes had the support of parents, of teachers and of legislators. We needed to be sure that in developing a system of testing either in the province or in terms of a national system, it would be a system that would answer some questions rather than raise ongoing concerns.

One of the things I found in my time as Minister of Education was that with the measurements we had, with the outcomes we did have, there did not appear to be any correlation between the amount of money spent per student within an education system and the outcomes if we measure those outcomes on the basis of how many young people go on to complete high school, how many young people go on to post-secondary education, how many young people win scholarships. There did not seem to be any correlation between the number of dollars that were spent per pupil and the results.

That was very troubling, because I think there had been a tendency in education to make assumptions about the number of dollars having a direct correlation to the effect of those dollars. Given the vast difference between the per-pupil cost in the so-called richer boards, the boards that have more assessment, and those that do not, that provided some comfort, I think, to the parents and

educators in the smaller and poorer boards. But it offered little comfort to all of us who pay education costs, who see the province paying a good portion of tax dollars towards education. It really raised very immediately and very directly the issue of how we, as legislators, can ensure that the quality of education can be seen to be something of which we can all be proud in this province.

While I believe that some of the very, very severe criticisms that parents have directed at the system, that some researchers have directed at the system are probably overstated, the issue is that we must have confidence in the system. If we, as parents and as public servants, are trying to convince young people to stay in school, are trying to convince them to invest their own funds in education, and trying to convince parents to support them to continue in their education and to support that financially, we have to have some sense of confidence that what is happening in our schools is really preparing our young people for a lifelong learning experience. As this discussion went on, it became very clear to us that it was necessary to find a way to provide that kind of an evaluation.

Our thoughts were confirmed by the recommendations of the royal commission because they too, in their hundreds and hundreds of hours spent with parents and educators and those involved in the governance of schools, were saying the same thing, "We have to find a way to do this." The creation of an Education Quality and Accountability Office was very much the outcome that was expected as a result of that. That is why we are continuing to support this notion and will support the government's bill, because we do believe very strongly that we, as citizens in this province, deserve the assurance that the dollars we spend and the efforts we make in terms of educating the young people of this province are well spent, that those who are in charge of the educational system are indeed accountable, and that we derive ongoing comfort from an ongoing evaluation of the outcomes of the efforts that we make. So we are supportive.

I would echo—and I won't go into much more detail than my colleague did—the real concern about the freedom of information and privacy issues in this bill. This is just one of many bills that have been brought forward by this government where the demand for the collection and retention of private information about individuals seems to be an overwhelming concern. We see it in Bill 31. We see it in Bill 30. We certainly saw it in Bill 26. I think this government should understand that people are legitimately concerned about the collection of data that is private, unless they know why it is being collected, how it is going to be kept confidential and of what use it is going to be. It is extremely important for us to know that. It needs to be out in the open, not just a provision such as this that the office must do this. We need to have some assurance that this kind of material will be used appropriately.

I personally believe that there may well be a good use for much of this material. If, as my colleague suggested, one of the elements that we might want to know is whether or not there are gender differences in terms of the outcomes of our education system, that may well be a legitimate question, particularly if we see, as in mea-

surements that have been done so far, young women performing at a very high level in elementary school and declining in their performance in secondary school and frequently not going on to post-secondary education at the same rate as their rate in the population. That should concern us. Similarly, it should concern us if we find there is an area of work our students are not excelling at.

The whole purpose of doing evaluation is to tell those who are teaching and those who are making determinations about curriculum, making policy decisions, what we need to improve. Measurement simply for the sake of measurement is useless. The whole purpose of this is to find out how we can do better, how we can help students who may need supplementation in one area, how we can ensure that where we are already doing very well, we're not pouring the majority of our resources there but are looking at the need of shifting resources into another area. That is the value of this kind of evaluation.

1740

I'm quite concerned about one element of this bill that my colleague mentioned briefly but I want to expound upon. When we were talking about doing the testing process, we based it very seriously on the need to test at regular intervals, partly because we know children develop at different stages and in different ways, and partly because if the purpose of this evaluation is to enable us to correct what are inadequacies in the system, we need to be testing frequently. That's why we determined that we needed to test at grade 3, grade 6, grade 9 and grade 11.

We also determined that it was really important not to have these tests carried on away from the classroom teacher. We listened to teachers but we also listened to research experts who told us that it is important for the classroom teacher to be very closely involved and engaged in this process of evaluation. So under our plan, with testing at grade 3, grade 6, grade 9 and grade 11, those tests were then marked by the classroom teacher. Obviously, the agency, whatever agency had been created, would have needed to do spot checks to make sure that process was being done appropriately, and no one ever questioned that.

But under this scheme—and presumably, at least from what I've heard the minister say or what has been attributed to him, because of cost—you have cut the evaluation to grade 3 and grade 11. The reason it costs you more is because you've taken the marking away from the classroom teacher and you've put it with the central agency. This is a very serious mistake, I would suggest to you, in terms of engaging those teachers in the process, making them part of the process. But I also will tell you that I think it defeats the purpose of evaluation in the first place. If there is no testing done between grade 3 and grade 11, you will not know how to correct what is happening at those other stages. You will not even catch in that second testing at grade 11 many of the students who may have dropped out of school because they were not succeeding as they went along the way, and you will not have a method that is available to determine what it is and at what point that supplementation is needed to keep young people in school. That's a very serious error, in my view.

I think you need to look again at what you are trying to accomplish. I believe what we need to accomplish is really building that sense that we have a system that is trying to provide the highest quality of education to each student, that takes into account the particular abilities of that student and uses those abilities to make sure that student learns as well as possible and is embarked on that course of lifelong learning, which we all know is important.

We know that those students who are not doing well in our system, those students who do not complete our secondary schools, still number very, very high. There are disputes about the figures, but certainly more than 25%. Generally speaking, I think it's somewhere between 20% and 30%, depending on who's doing the accounting, as to who stays in school and completes school, and that disparity is based on whether or not you measure those who come back to school later, who didn't complete in the first place but come back and get their high school diploma later. So there's a legitimate reason for the discrepancy in the statistics. It all depends on how you tell the tale.

But the reality is, although every year we have improved, we have to remember that there was a time when the majority of students in this province were lucky if they completed grade 8, and then that number gradually increased and completing secondary school became a value in our society and, in fact, as we know, a necessary value if people are going to be self-sufficient.

But in an affluent and caring society, which I think we all believe we have in Ontario, the numbers of students who do not complete their secondary education is quite shocking. It is not worthy of us that we have not found ways to keep those students in school, and if you listen to educators, they will tell you that what you hear and find out about the student at grade 3 and what you can improve on at grade 3, if you are not testing as that student develops into pre-puberty and into puberty and goes through that transition from the primary, the elementary school into the secondary school, that's where we lose them. That is exactly where we lose those students again and again: somewhere between grade 8 and grade 10. Yet you've taken one of the most important elements of evaluating the educational system out by stopping the testing at grade 6 and grade 11. If it is not done regularly, you will not be finding out the things that will enable you to ensure we have an effective and efficient system.

I think that one of the real issues we face when we're talking about accountability in education is determining what we mean by that and how we expect to hold school boards, individual schools, individual teachers and, I would suggest, individual students accountable for the educational process.

We often somehow think that this responsibility is not a shared responsibility, but it is. It is a shared responsibility in a very real way, and so if we're going to set up this kind of an office, one of the things we need to be sure we are doing is basing it on shared values. That is extremely important, as we found out in the discussions with the royal commission.

We know very clearly that when parents talk about education, they have a series of criticisms, which may or

may not reflect what actually is happening in the particular classroom. We often have preconceived notions, and one of the really important aspects of this particular change is making sure that it goes along hand in hand with the efforts we began in the previous government to keep parents more involved, to keep the community more involved in the school.

The results of this kind of evaluation, taken all by themselves, may not give the kind of assurance to parents that they need. They need to know what the experience is like that their children are having. And frankly, as more and more of us in our communities do not have students who are going through the educational system, we need that assurance too.

Education changes dramatically from one generation to the next. I can remember when I was in primary school, for example, the very idea that someone would use a calculator was absolute anathema, and these days teaching methods have changed to the point where we know that computer-assisted and technologically assisted learning is going to be the future for young people in this province. It may not have been our experience, but the fact that it is their experience does not make it bad education. In fact, they often educate us, and I think those of us who are parents know that very often we learn a great deal if we spend time with our children helping them with their assignments. We in fact learn some of the new methodologies. We may not like them because they may not be familiar to us, but very often we get a better sense of what that experience is like for our child.

One of the things we know is that one of the major determinants of health for all of us in our province is how healthy, how strong, how confident our young people are. One of the worries that has been expressed again and again by those who deal with children who have special problems is this need to ensure that the evaluation process does not undermine self-confidence and self-esteem in those young people.

1750

I think one of the things that we know from the very careful people who've been involved in the commission that has been studying this is that they understand the need to devise a system that is going to bolster self-confidence and self-esteem rather than undermine it for those young people. One of the aspects of that is going to be how we use the information that we get from testing. If young people see us using that material in competitive ways, if they see us using it to pit one school board or one school against another, that is not likely to be a very good experience, because they will feel implicated and perhaps even guilty about the standing of their particular school. They may feel unworthy if they happen to be attending a school which overall is compared badly to another school.

We had this experience in our city. We had an experience like that because one of our trustees insisted on sharing the information that was released to the board around testing to the press, and the press drew conclusions from it which were very hurtful of the system as a whole, very hurtful of individuals working within the system and frankly very hurtful for many of the students in the system.

So when we talk about the need to ensure that the information and the evaluation that is contained in this bill is used properly, we speak from some experience, and many of you may have had similar kinds of experience. Comparability is going to be difficult. It will be in a simplistic way perhaps possible, but it will not, as my colleague suggested, be possible in that micro-way of comparing one situation to another, because the context of the situation may be very different.

If you have a school, for example, that because of the financial position of the board, the decisions that the board has made has a very streamlined program, very, very few of the ancillary programs available to it, like a music program or an art program, very extensive sports programs and so on, you might very well see all of the staff and the administrators and the parents of that school concentrating their efforts where the school actually has programs. One would hope in those circumstances that the outcomes for what is offered to those students would be very fine.

But is that a well-rounded education? When people test in the areas that we're testing, and those in fact are the barebones areas that are the only things offered at that school, does it tell us very much about the whole educational experience of those children? Not necessarily. If we test in a way that does not ensure that it is focused on the use of the facts that young people have, that it doesn't focus on the skills as opposed to answers or content, we also have a problem.

We would urge that as this process goes forward, the kind of expertise that has been brought to bear on this be continued, that we continue to examine and to have very clear mechanisms of accountability for this office, not just accountability for school boards or individual teachers or individual schools but accountability for this office, because the creation of an office shouldn't necessarily be the end of it, and too often in government in the past it has been. It will be important for there to be an ongoing look at how successful this office is at winning and maintaining the confidence of the people of Ontario that the task it is performing is valuable, that it is helping us to ensure that young people have a better education than they would have had without it.

I would say that it will be important for all of us to be listening very carefully to the people in our communities about how they are experiencing the realities of this new process. We know only too well that very often a population will ask for something and then when they get it they don't like the results. So we need to be very clear that we are constantly measuring and evaluating the

office itself, not just the students who will be evaluated by it, not just the system that will be evaluated by it.

It is really important, as we go through the remaining steps of our discussion on this in committee—I understand that it will be referred to committee—that we listen very carefully to those who come in front of us, that we not listen with, if you like, discriminatory ears that say, “I will hear this if a parent says it, but I won't hear it if a teacher says it,” or vice versa, “I won't hear information or advice if it comes from a researcher; I will only hear it if it comes from a school administrator.” We have to be sure this is an open process and that we listen carefully and share the information that comes forward.

There are a lot of apprehensions about this kind of change in a system. If we are to keep everybody who is involved convinced that this is going to be a valuable exercise, if we are going to continue to build the confidence of parents, students, teachers, administrators and the general community in this measurement of educational outcomes, then it is going to be important, for that discussion at committee and for any changes that happen in this act, to be very responsive to what we hear. I would hope the members of the government are really focused on the need for this to bolster publicly funded education, not in fact to destroy publicly funded education. You need to know there are real worries that people have in this province.

One of the proudest things we have is the education system we have built here. The Progressive Conservatives have reason to be very proud of a legacy they inherited from 42 years of government, from people like Bill Davis, John Robarts and Bette Stephenson. It is very important for us to build on that.

I say in closing that as we go through this process, let us try to really work together to build and maintain that confidence in what I think is one of the finest systems we have and what we are all engaged in: ensuring that this bill will help us to ascertain and to maintain that confidence.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is there further debate? No? Then we'll put the question.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This bill is referred to the standing committee on social development. Agreed? Agreed.

It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Tuesday at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
52	2070	1	2	with Jager and with St Marys Paper for the crown

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First Session, 36th Parliament

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Première session, 36^e législature

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Tuesday 9 April 1996

Mardi 9 avril 1996

Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
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Mardi 9 avril 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORKFARE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): We saw last week the initial information that was released on the program this government is going to introduce called workfare. From what we have seen, it appears to be a program that is simply going to provide free labour to the private sector. It is now going to mean that a private sector employee is going to have a choice: He or she can hire someone and pay them a decent wage, or he or she can find someone from the welfare rolls for 17 hours a week for free. Tsubouchi's slaves will be hard at work throughout the province of Ontario.

The problem in Ontario with welfare is simply the lack of jobs. The reality is that as job availability increases, as jobs increase out there, welfare numbers shrink. There's a clear correlation.

Historically, it has been proven that workfare has failed, and failed miserably, across Canada and across North America. The minister maybe can explain to me how helping build baseball diamonds is going to help the unemployed steelworker in my riding get a job. The problem with Ontario is not a shortage of baseball diamonds; the problem with Ontario is a shortage of real work that people can do and of work that welfare recipients can do.

I challenge this government to put its efforts into and concentrate on creating jobs, because I can tell you that if this government tomorrow can give me 10,000 jobs and make them available, I will find this government 10,000 welfare recipients who are willing to take those jobs and work hard at those jobs. Stop patronizing people on welfare, start creating some real programs and stop your continuous assault on the poor in Ontario.

FOOD BANKS

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I'd like to direct my statement today to the Minister of Community and Social Services. On December 2, 1995, I attended the official opening of Cochrane's first food bank. In its first week, it assisted 22 families. As of early March, they had responded to well over 300 requests for food.

Over 200 adults and almost as many children have benefited from this service that was initiated by a group of citizens concerned about the plight of the needy in Cochrane. As programs are eliminated by this government and social assistance rates are reduced, more and

more people are unable to provide the most basic of needs for themselves and their families.

The food bank recipients are from a number of circumstances: welfare and family benefits, 66%; old age security and Canada pension, 16%; no income, 6%; part-time workers, 5%; unemployment insurance, 4%; other sources, 3%.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the citizens of Cochrane for rallying together to assist those in need in their community. Their fine work is commendable. This is Cochrane's first food bank and hopefully it will be the last. The defeat of the Tory government in the next provincial election will serve to bring about a more giving and secure climate in which people in this province can live.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): Today marks the start of environmental advocacy weeks and events for 1996. Environmental advocacy weeks, a tradition in Ontario for almost two decades, promote public awareness of important environmental issues. The Ministry of Natural Resources and its partners will work together to organize advocacy weeks events and distribute educational materials to support that goal.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is working in partnership with many local, provincial and federal agencies to advance public knowledge of such important environmental issues as rehabilitation of wildlife habitat, rabies prevention and tree planting.

Today, April 9, marks the start of National Wildlife Week. Since 1947, National Wildlife Week has been an important means of raising awareness about wildlife and of promoting public participation in wildlife conservation and habitat protection. This year's theme is "We're Part of the World Wide Web of Life—Get Online with Nature's Network." Our partners in National Wildlife Week include the Canadian Wildlife Federation as well as many federal, provincial and territorial wildlife agencies.

I invite all members to support National Wildlife Week as well as all other environmental advocacy weeks activities planned in their communities this year.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): On April 2, in his answer to a question on the elimination of rent controls, the Premier said, "Before rent control is removed, we will have something in place that is going to be better than what we have now."

Mr Premier, I would like to believe you, tenants would like to believe you, but unfortunately rumours persist and the anxiety grows. It is the seniors who are on fixed

incomes or pensions who will bear the brunt of rent increases and government cuts, seniors who will have nowhere to turn. We want to hear a message of reassurance and no more rhetoric. Tenants want peace of mind in knowing that they will have a place to call home.

Mr Premier, you have pushed legislation without consultation, you have abandoned those you said you would protect, and so I ask you this. Before you introduce your plan to scrap rent controls, at the very least table a plan that will protect tenants from the drastic rent increases which many tenants, including seniors, will face.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Over the last few months we've seen the Premier and the Minister of Education continue to insist that the \$1-billion cut to elementary and secondary education in the province won't affect students and the classroom. The problem for the Premier and the Minister of Education is that it is evident, as you look across Ontario, that none of the students themselves believe what the Premier and the Minister of Education are saying.

For example, over the last 10 days the Dryden Board of Education has had students not attending high schools because they are protesting the cuts to the education system and the cuts to their board. For example, in communities like Belleville and Bancroft and other communities near Peterborough, students were out of school, in some cases for three days, protesting the cuts to their schools and to programs that matter to them as students.

It is time for the Minister of Education and the Premier to come clean about education. The fact of the matter is that the cuts being imposed by the government on the school boards are having the impact of making our schools far less attractive to the students who attend them and far less likely to be able to turn out the kind of education those students need. The fact of the matter is that this government is cutting the secondary and the elementary school system in this province into pieces; hence students will suffer.

1340

HEALTH CARE

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): It's a pleasure to rise to ask my colleagues on both sides of the House to join me in acknowledging World Health Day that was formally observed on Sunday, April 7.

The theme this year, "Healthy Cities for Better Life," is particularly appropriate for Ontario, because Ontario started the Healthy Communities movement that has spread around the world. Ontario is recognized worldwide for this innovative work.

The health promotion branch supports the efforts of the Healthy Communities Coalition, which has developed a strong Ontario network, cities and communities across the province promoting good health. Several projects have started in cities large and small as a result of their work. The healthy city office in the city of Toronto is a prime example. These projects look at the economic and envi-

ronmental aspects of health and encourage people to get involved to find ways to help their own community.

As citizens of a developed nation, Ontarians have already learned about the effects of traffic, noise, pollution. The coalition has helped develop the network to support the work to improve the lives of Ontarians, not only in cities but in the rural areas as well.

This government obviously is very proud of the \$6-million reinvestment it has made in terms of children's health, and especially in the fight against German measles, Ontario's children are among the lucky ones. More than one million children still die every year around the world from measles. These children live among the urban poor, and unlike our own youngsters, may not have the benefit of a farsighted program such as our measles immunization campaign.

We are proud of what the Ministry of Health is doing in Ontario, and we commit—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

CHILD CARE

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Parents across Ontario have been put on hold by Minister Tsubouchi while the minister conducts a review of the child care system. We don't know much about these consultations, but leaked sources tell us the government is serious about making changes to the Day Nurseries Act.

Here is what we know: Changes to the Day Nurseries Act ultimately mean less care for children; a voucher system means fewer available dollars to secure quality day care spaces for children.

Even yesterday's *Globe and Mail* quotes an American major study that shows that the fewer supervisors for children, the higher the incidence of inadequate care. "For instance, the percentage of preschoolers considered to be 'not receiving appropriate care' jumped to 52% from 9% once the ratio inched up from one adult for every eight children to one for every nine."

People across Ontario responded to Harris's attack on children. I'm sending over just some of these responses.

The reality is that the government concept of consultation on child care is a joke. It is consultation by invitation only, and we have been completely excluded along with many other child care providers across Ontario—just one more example of a government that refuses to listen.

I encourage the minister to have a look at the hand-painted symbol sent over by the children in Ontario, whom the minister owes a response to.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Workers of Ontario continue to believe that the minister responsible for gutting the WCB is holding his meetings in private because he's afraid to come forward with the kinds of options they're looking at.

We know this government ran on a platform of denying and cutting back benefits in order to give a rebate to corporations that already think they're paying too much. The reality is that had the corporations been

paying their fair share of the payments all along, workers would not be facing the kind of attack that they are by this government's using the unfunded liability as a cover to go after workers' benefits. We know that the Jackson plan will involve cutting back benefits that workers have earned. It's their right. It's an insurance program. This is not some giveaway that the government of the day has the right to pull back on a whim.

The government is fooling no one by suggesting, when its own members stand up and ask questions about meetings that are taking place, that the minister is honestly trying to connect with injured workers and deal with their issues. We still demand that there be public hearings across the province. We will not let up on that. Workers, and injured workers in particular, have a right to know what this government is going to do to them, and its continuing to hide behind a public process, a sham process that doesn't work, will fool no one.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

FOOD BANKS

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): April 3 to April 14 is the spring food drive for the food bank of Waterloo region. I encourage the members of this House to call their local food bank and arrange for their constituency office to be a dropoff centre for non-perishable food donations.

I am also wearing a rather colourful tie that our food bank is selling to raise money for its food drive. Over 700 grade 7 and 8 students from Waterloo county have donated their artistic talents and have designed these neckties for their own "Tie Up Hunger" campaign. Students were asked to create designs based on one of the three themes, such as food, nutrition or people helping people. The winning tie designs have been manufactured with the student's name on the label. On October 16, 1995, three finalists were selected as follows: Brian Wall, who is the creator of this tie that I'm wearing, from Margaret Avenue Senior School; Elsie Bauman from Linwood District School; and Nicole Stafford from St Anne School.

The ties are \$50 each, with all the proceeds from the sale going to the food bank of Waterloo region. If you're interested in purchasing a tie, please contact my office.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is to the Minister of Finance, who I believe is about to resume his seat. Minister, you will be aware that last week, to much fanfare, the Minister of Education and Training announced your government's summer program for youth. The minister was happy to brag that the program is going to create some 5,000 new jobs for young people, who face such high unemployment levels, even though—and there was a certain hypocrisy in this announcement—you are actually cutting \$3 million out of that program.

Today we read in the paper that the government was or, for all we know, may still be considering cutting the youth employment funding by up to 50%. We understand that the Premier said this morning in a scrum that this document was not government policy. I want to give you an opportunity, Minister, to tell us categorically today that your government does not intend to make any more cuts to funding to help young people in this province get jobs, which they so desperately need to pay for their tuition expenses this fall.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I can unequivocally state to the Leader of the Opposition today that I certainly know of no document, suggestion or otherwise, that would reduce funding for youth programs in the province of Ontario by 50%. I might say to her and to all Ontarians that they should take into account that I don't know what document the media is talking about.

Interjection: Oh, yes you do.

Hon Mr Eves: No, I don't. I do know that every single ministry in this government, as a result of the November 29 statement, and as a matter of fact as a result of a recommendation made by the Ontario Financial Review Commission, is undergoing a process of developing a business plan for the first time in the province's history. I know that every single program in every single ministry is being looked at. We are going to look at what is the vital business that the government of Ontario should be providing to Ontarians, and we are rethinking and restructuring how government does business. I don't think anybody should quibble with that intention, and I think I've answered the honourable member's question.

1350

Mrs McLeod: I understood the minister to say somewhere in that ramble that they would not be cutting youth employment by as much as 50%. Presumably then the \$3-million cut already made in youth employment will stand.

I would like to ask the minister a second question about the document that was described in today's papers. You of course are aware, because we've raised the issue in the House and it's been raised in the media, that in the last two weeks the residents of Collingwood have had to boil their water because of concerns about the safety of the local water supply. You will also be aware that cuts to the Ministry of Environment and Energy budget already total some 30% and have had a particular effect on the ability of communities to proceed with sewer and water renewal projects. Yet we read in that purported document today that you might be considering reducing even further the funding for sewer and water treatment projects for Ontario's cities and towns.

Minister, I'm sure you will agree that the importance of these sewer and water projects for our health and safety has been highlighted by the urgency of the situation in Collingwood. It seems unbelievable to think that you would be considering any further cuts. The Premier does say that those reports are out of date. Again, I give you an opportunity: Will you rule out categorically any further cuts to funding for sewer and water treatment?

Hon Mr Eves: I can't comment on specific ministries' business plan for the very good reason that I haven't seen

every ministry's specific business plan, and it hasn't been—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You didn't see the plan, you didn't read the plan.

Hon Mr Eves: I say to the honourable members opposite, it's too bad that they wouldn't have treated government more like a business and less as a laughing matter in the five years they were there. We wouldn't have a debt of \$100 billion today.

Every single program in every single ministry in the government is up for review. I would obviously presume that the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Health would certainly have some concern for the issues that the leader of the official opposition raises, and when their specific business plans are approved through the cabinet process, then the honourable member will be entitled, as indeed every Ontarian will be entitled, to see the business plan for every single ministry in the government.

Mrs McLeod: This minister supposedly has a budget coming in less than a month; he has supposedly had a budget coming for almost a year now. I think it's high time that the public had some understanding of exactly where this minister plans to find the dollars that he is taking out of that budget.

The minister keeps referring to the fact, the broad statement that all they're doing is looking at how they can get more efficient service in government, that that's what all of this is all about. That's not what this is all about. This is about an arbitrary set of cuts being made to pay for a tax cut. This is about a government having cut summer employment, having considered cutting it even more than that, summer employment for youth, whose unemployment is running at more than 20%. It's about a government that won't today even rule out further cuts to sewer and water treatment, which have been shown to be so essential for the health and safety of our residents. It's a government that last week refused to rule out cutting support for the disabled by 10%.

The Premier has said publicly that there will be no further spending cuts in the budget that this minister will present next month, and every day we hear about more cuts. You will not even acknowledge how much you have to cut to pay for your tax cut. What is it? Are you going to have more cuts? Will we see more and more cuts to finance that tax cut for the wealthy? When will we know the full price that the people of this province have to pay for your tax cuts?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the honourable member knows very well that in the last year, within a year, I will have made three statements with respect to Ontario's economy. She knows full well that on July 21 there was a fiscal statement made that talked about dealing with the immediate problem of government expenditures and that there was an expenditure reduction of \$1.9 billion. She knows full well that on November 29 there was another economic statement made in the House and she knows that there were targets set for various ministries, which are going about reaching those targets as we speak, of anywhere from \$4.5 billion to \$5.5 billion on an annualized basis. She will see the result of that exercise in the budget early in May. She will see exactly the things she

is asking for today in the budget when the document comes out.

I must say to the honourable member, as I've said before, that the expenditure reduction exercise this government has undertaken is because of the fiscal problem and the financial state of the Ontario economy that we inherited on June 26. It has nothing to do with a tax cut. If there's anything to do with a tax cut, you will see it in the budgetary document itself.

We inherited a government that was spending \$1 million an hour more than it took in in revenue; we inherited a government that ran up a debt of \$100 billion; we inherited a government that thought it was more important to spend \$9 billion a year on interest on its unlimited credit card than it was on all education in the province combined, than it was on all hospitals in the province combined. Those were the priorities of your government and their government but they're not the priorities of our government.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: This government's priority is to give back \$14 million a day to the wealthiest people in this province, and that too is a reality that everybody in this province is going to start to pay for. Some of the cuts we have only begun to see.

The Speaker: Whom is your question to?

Mrs McLeod: Some of the cuts are hitting too hard already.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, the children's aid society in Simcoe county today reports that two families have put up their children for adoption as a direct result of your 21.5% cut in welfare rates. We're talking about two children, one from each family. Both children are under the age of 10. One child has already been placed with a family; the second child is awaiting placement.

You and the Premier are fond of saying that the cuts you're making today are for the benefit of our children. I ask you, Minister, what do you say to these children? How do you explain to these two children that they are no longer with their parents because you slashed their families' welfare payments?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): It's not just simply about making cuts; it's also about making the system better. That's what this whole exercise is about.

It's very unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition always commences her statements with various premises, most of which don't really have any grounding. However, that's the way she normally starts so she can get to asking some sort of question.

There are two parts to this. Certainly caring for children is a priority for us and we'll continue to help the children's aid societies deliver their mandated services. We still provide over \$360 million a year to support children's aid societies and we provide services to children who are in need. The connection here is with the children's aid.

The other part of this is that when the particular cut was made in terms of welfare benefit rates, we provided people the opportunity to earn back the difference between the old and new rates. We believe this will assist people in terms of getting part-time work, leading to full-time work. Clearly the old system did not work, and that's why we've had to embark upon fundamental reform.

Mrs McLeod: Let me try to be clear. We're talking about families with children whose support you cut by 23.5%. Not one thing you have proposed will put one cent back to help those families feed or clothe their children.

Minister, deal with what happened today in Simcoe, where the children's aid society says there is only one reason why these two families have had to take the drastic action of putting their children up for adoption. It is because of your cutbacks that two families have already given up their children for adoption, and the Simcoe Children's Aid Society says there are eight other families who have approached them with exactly the same problem. Minister, I really wonder what you expect these parents to do. You have cut their support. They can no longer feed or clothe their children.

1400

I think all of us remember the now Premier of this province saying during or prior to an election campaign that if parents on welfare can't look after their children, the children's aid society should just step in. Well, today we're seeing that become the reality, and I wonder, Minister, if this is all part of your plan. The Premier said it should happen. Is this okay with you now?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I suppose with the opposition, the more you repeat something—hopefully, if you repeat it often enough, it becomes a true statement. The statements she's attributing to the Premier obviously are incorrect.

No one's disputing the fact that when we cut the benefits by 21.6% they were still 10% above the average of the rest of the provinces in Canada, but we've also provided people with the ability to earn this back.

If this is a specific occasion which the Leader of the Opposition has a great concern about, I would suggest that she send over the particulars to me. I will certainly look into it if that's the case. I can only talk right now in terms of the generalities of the programs, that certainly we gave people the opportunity to earn back the difference.

Mrs McLeod: I find it hard to believe that when two families in this province are forced to give up their children for adoption—this isn't a secret message; we got it from the front page of the Barrie newspapers—this minister's staff, the people around him, wouldn't consider it important enough to tell the minister what's happening as a result of his cutbacks.

Minister, it's so clear to everyone but you. You said you were going to cut welfare payments. You did. You cut welfare payments for families with children. The Premier has said, "Well, if families can't look after their children, they should let the children's aid society step in." Today they have. The children's aid society has been forced to step in, and your welfare cutbacks are now

forcing parents to give up their children. They are cutbacks that are designed for one thing only, I say to you and the Minister of Finance and the Premier, and that is to pay for that tax cut that mostly benefits the rich. So here are the fruits of your action: people putting up their children for adoption so that 10% of the richest people in this province will receive more than half the tax cut promised by Mike Harris.

Minister, will you just admit that? Will you admit that it is the children of this province paying the price for the Mike Harris tax cut that benefits the most wealthy?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Clearly we try to give people the opportunity by the earn-back provision to get a job, get the opportunity to do that. We're not disputing that things may be difficult, but we're trying to provide that opportunity, and given the workfare program, we certainly will.

The Leader of the Opposition is first of all, I guess, debating the merits of the cut of 21.6%, which left our rates 10% above the average of the other provinces. I might remind the Leader of the Opposition that clearly in her document, the red book—I might just quote out of here—it says, "However, when people who are able to work refuse to participate in any of these programs, they will receive only a basic allowance that reflects the national average and is less than the current allowance." The Leader of the Opposition would have reduced rates 31.6%, so that's my answer.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The minister doesn't seem to understand that we're talking about people rather than rates.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations regarding the technical standards branch of his ministry and the upcoming business plan for the ministry.

We understand that the inspection of elevators and escalators, amusement devices, fuels such as gasoline, propane and natural gas, and pressure vessels—fuel safety—apparently are being proposed for privatization, turning over to the private sector. Would you clarify whether or not this is indeed your ministry's position, your government position, that the work that has been carried on by the technical standards division will be privatized?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): No, that is not the position of our government.

Mr Wildman: Can the minister assure us, can he guarantee that the work of the division, the inspection of things like elevators, pressure vessels and fuel safety will in fact continue to be carried on by his ministry staff, that the ministry will be responsible for public safety and consumer education and protection, and that these services will not be privatized or turned over to the private sector by contract or for self-regulation by the industry?

Hon Mr Sterling: Our government, as you know, is looking at every program within our government to find out better ways of delivering the services to the people of

Ontario. Our primary concern is with the safety of our elevators, of our amusement devices and the other things that the technical standards branch does under my ministry.

We are looking at every option, including privatization, which you have mentioned, but we've made no decisions on them. We want to do better for less, and privatization is but one option in looking at all of those kinds of things.

Mr Wildman: I notice that the minister has now indicated that they're looking at all the options and privatization may be one of them. The final decision hasn't been made. Can the minister confirm that the industry itself has not asked for this change and that if the government proceeds with it, potentially there will not only be horrendous possibilities for safety problems, but also a loss of revenue to the provincial government?

Hon Mr Sterling: No, basically all of the premises that you have said are incorrect. Some members of the industry have asked for it. There is a possibility, in fact, when we look at this in depth, that we can enhance the safety of the people of Ontario. There will be no loss of revenue to the government as a consequence of doing these, if done properly. We may give a non-profit corporation, if that's the choice of the government, the opportunity for more flexibility to react to emerging new technology in this very, very technical area.

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): In the absence of the Minister of Environment and Energy, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Your government's business plan for the Ministry of Environment and Energy says you have major plans to gut the protection now provided to the Niagara Escarpment. Your government has already slashed the escarpment commission's staffing by almost half, making it harder to protect this ecologically sensitive area. As well, there's a long lineup of special interests who want to have the commission abolished, the plan gutted and the development-hungry municipalities given control of the escarpment. Can you confirm that your government will not be returning planning authority over the Niagara Escarpment lands to the municipalities?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am not aware of any plans by the Ministry of Environment and Energy to turn the Niagara Escarpment back to the local municipalities.

Mr Hampton: I'm pleased to hear that the minister is not aware of any plans, so let me just probe a bit further. The minister and this government have been listening a lot to the aggregate producers who want to get their hands on the escarpment's gravel, to the garbage industry which is interested in placing some dumps and to the developers who want to build more golf courses and condos in this highly scenic area.

Will the minister confirm that planning authority will be kept in the hands of the commission? Will you confirm that you will retain the escarpment plan and its legislation, with boundaries that protect at least as much land as they do now?

Hon Mr Leach: I can only tell the member that there are no plans at this point in time to change the operation of the Niagara Escarpment.

1410

Mr Hampton: Let me go back again, because what I heard the minister say is that there are no plans to change the operation of the escarpment.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): At this time.

Mr Hampton: At this time. I want to go back to the issue of the commission. As you know, the commission was established because this area of the escarpment is recognized as a unique world biosphere reserve; it's recognized as being ecologically unique and ecologically worth protection. The escarpment commission was created to ensure that the proper level of protection was afforded the escarpment. Are you saying that there are no plans to either remove the escarpment commission or water down the escarpment commission's authority with respect to planning on the Niagara Escarpment?

Hon Mr Leach: As I've said in the previous two answers, we have no plans at this time to do anything with the Niagara Escarpment, but if the member thinks it's a good idea, I'd be pleased to look into it.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. You have extolled the virtues of deregulation of the bus industry in Ontario, much to the chagrin of millions of people who live in the small-town and rural areas of this province. The experience in the United States when they deregulated in 1982 was that there were 11,820 communities that had bus service; nine years later, after deregulation, less than half, 5,690 communities, now have bus service.

Minister, how could you stand in the House in days gone by and contend that communities across Ontario like Leamington and Blenheim and Essex and Cottam and Long Sault and Wheatley, hundreds of communities across Ontario, are going to have adequate bus service when you see the experience south of the border and when common sense would tell you that those communities will lose their service once you take away regulation?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would like to once again say to the honourable member that bus deregulation is a sign of the times. We must be able to open up this province and offer opportunities to people who want to get into business. Clearly, by deregulating the busing industry, we'll give people the opportunity of actually enhancing services in small communities. Under regulation, over 400 communities lost bus service. Could we do worse?

Mr Bradley: The answer to the minister's question is yes, you could do worse if you proceed with deregulation of the bus industry. It was contended in the past, and I think with a good deal of justification, that a licence to operate on the major lucrative routes of the province was contingent upon a company's requirement to serve rural and often less profitable routes. Also, by agreeing to scheduled services for these communities, the companies could then gain access to what would be considered to be

a money-making charter service or charter market in the province.

Do you not see that if you implement deregulation what you're going to have in Ontario is the major busing companies cherry-picking, taking only the most lucrative routes and abandoning thousands upon thousands of people who live in small towns, villages and rural areas of this province?

Hon Mr Palladini: I see the opposite happening. I actually see the competitiveness of it and the possibility of cheaper fares. As far as the big busing companies that the member is referring to are concerned, with that competitive spirit within that industry, it is not going to be that easy to cherry-pick; I believe it's the contrary.

This is where I believe the opportunity is for a small operator, an entrepreneur who wants to get into the busing business, who doesn't have a quarter of a million dollars but is able to go to the bank and borrow \$25,000 or \$30,000 and get a minivan that will be able to feed the major bus companies. I see this clearly as an opportunity that Ontario is looking forward to. Small-town Ontario will benefit from deregulation.

NATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Attorney General and minister responsible for native affairs. Last Thursday our leader, Bud Wildman, asked you whether or not you had let the Chiefs of Ontario know what is in your ministry's business plan. You answered only that an aboriginal policy framework was presented to the chiefs and that every program was being reviewed and evaluated. Clearly you did not answer the leader of the third party's question.

In that policy framework you state, under the title "Openness," "The government is committed to public scrutiny of its undertakings and the fair and inclusive involvement of aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in matters affecting them both."

I ask you again: Did you make it clear to the chiefs at that meeting that you are, according to the business plan of the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, terminating funding for the implementation of the statement of political relationship?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I've indicated, I spoke very clearly with native leadership and made it very clear that we will continue to speak with one another as equals. I think that goes to the very heart of the question that I've been asked.

Mrs Boyd: In your response last Thursday you also ignored the very pointed comments made by Chief Peters in his letter of March 27. He told you that there are very serious concerns about the policy framework and the comments made by you as the minister to the aboriginal community. In fact he says, at the end of his second paragraph: "The entire process was very disrespectful and quickly dissipated. It is a classic example of who believes they have the power and who is powerless."

Minister, did you tell the chief that the government intends to reduce capital spending on infrastructure in aboriginal communities from \$20 million to \$12 million over the next two years? Did you advise Chief Peters that

the government intends, as outlined in the business plan, to cut funding to the Indian Commission of Ontario and that you intend to implement a 28% reduction over two years to operating grants to first nations? Did you tell Chief Peters about your government's plan to significantly reduce first nations programs that were designed to identify and develop economic opportunities for first nations people? Where is this promise of openness? Did you tell the chiefs that?

Hon Mr Harnick: I spoke very candidly with chiefs of a number of the first nations and aboriginal leaders. We spoke about the aboriginal policy framework; we spoke primarily about the focus of that framework, the focus being to develop economic opportunities for first nations and aboriginal peoples. We talked about finding sources of capital and expertise to deal with economic development, and the first nations and aboriginal leaders that I spoke with received the message positively. I received invitations from almost everyone there to visit their communities to continue these discussions. I intend to do that, and I'm disappointed that Chief Peters wasn't in agreement with the majority of the people who were there.

RIDE PROGRAM

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): My question is for the Solicitor General. There have been a number of recent media reports saying that the private sector is going to fund the RIDE program. How can it be that this is going to happen, when the RIDE program is so important to protecting public safety?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The private sector is not going to be funding the RIDE program, but in the Metro Toronto area, as a first step—and I give full credit to the Metro Toronto Police for this initiative. They have encouraged the private sector to get involved to augment the funds that will be flowing from the provincial government.

An announcement was made last week that some very responsible corporate citizens, along with community groups, have donated \$30,000 to the RIDE fund in the Metro area. This is going to enable the Metro police service to carry out RIDE checks throughout the year.

1420

Mr Skarica: Given that drunk driving remains the leading cause of criminal death and injury in the province, why are we hearing that the government is considering cancelling funding of the RIDE program?

Hon Mr Runciman: That's another rumour not based on fact. This week I'm sending out 119 letters to communities across this province indicating the levels of funding for this next fiscal year. This year we are doubling the RIDE funding to \$1.2 million right across the province. We strongly believe in this program. We are committed to public safety, and this government has committed to continuing to fund the RIDE program.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, since your govern-

ment came to power, there have been dramatic cutbacks in road repair and reconstruction. Tender totals for road repair to date have shown a 50% reduction in the amount of money being put aside for road maintenance and repair in this province.

Given that the Provincial Auditor warned you that 60% of the roads in this province are substandard, how can you justify your continual cuts when these ill-repaired roads are causing severe damage to automobiles, causing certainly havoc to public safety and doing severe damage to commerce in this province? How can you continue to cut back, considering the fact that the longer you delay and cut necessary repairs—in the future you're going to triple, quadruple the cost of road repairs? Why keep cutting?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank the member for Oakwood. Let me begin by saying I am aware that this winter has been very hard on roads, just like everybody in this House is aware. With the OPSEU strike, certain things that would have been able to get done weren't, so we're playing catch-up right now.

Let me assure this House and the people of Ontario that the potholes are being fixed and will continue to be fixed. The Provincial Auditor reported back in 1994 that, you're right, 60% of our highways are not the way they're supposed to be. I am concerned, this government is concerned about the last 10 years of neglect, that the provincial highways have deteriorated to this point. It was your two governments that didn't put the money back in the roads.

Mr Colle: As you know, this minister has a propensity for the perpetual whine: It's Ottawa's fault, it's the weather's fault, it's OPSEU's fault. I think it's your fault, Minister, because when you came to power in June you and your ministry cut the maintenance budget; in other words, the number of dollars that were tendered out for repairing roads, you cut them in half. In June they went from \$239 million to \$137 million and they continued to be cut, so you've cut the amount of money going into road repair, which the private sector would do, almost in half. It wasn't the weather or OPSEU or the NDP or the Liberals; your ministry cut the maintenance and repair budget and is still cutting.

Why do you do that when you know it's going to cost you a lot more down the road and it's going to cost Ontario motorists big time? You know what a front-end alignment costs these days. It can cost a person \$2,000. Stop blaming people and fix those potholes.

Hon Mr Palladini: Once again I would like to thank the member for Oakwood, and I want to say that I do care, this government does care, about our highway infrastructure. The good repair of our highways is a very critical thing. For our economic growth, we must pay attention, and that is one of the reasons why we are going to be putting more money back into infrastructure.

I would like to correct the member. He's saying that we are cutting highway infrastructure repairs. That is not true. We did not cut highway infrastructure repair back in our July statement or our November statement. We are going to be putting more money into our highway infrastructure this year than we have in the last six years. That's a commitment from the Mike Harris government.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. I was looking at the government of Ontario telephone directory to find out what it says under citizenship, culture and recreation, and I'll read only one line because I don't have the time to read more, but it says:

"The ministry, through its policies and programs, fosters access and equity for communities that experience barriers to full participation in society, including aboriginal people, cultural and racial minorities, immigrants and refugees, persons with disabilities and senior citizens."

These words used to mean something, but they don't mean the same thing any more. The anti-racism secretariat is gone, the Employment Equity Act is gone, the Advocacy Act is gone, the advisory council on seniors issues is gone. This government is closing the book on equity, and there's a final chapter that's coming. The final chapter is, as I understand, that in your business plan you plan to make some changes that would in effect shut down your ministry, and I would be concerned, because this minister is about to become redundant.

Some of the changes include cultural changes, which I will get to another day, but today I have learned that you intend to transfer the lead for seniors issues to the Ministry of Health, so I asked Bea Levis, who is the co-chair of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations, what she said, and she said:

"We fear that putting seniors under the health umbrella will focus seniors issues on a narrow health or physical agenda. The contribution of seniors to the total community, including social and economic issues, would be downplayed."

I agree with Bea. What does the minister think?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I think somewhere in that speech was a question, although I'm not quite sure what the question was, so I would ask the speaker of the question to be patient. This may be difficult for him to be, but I would suggest that he be patient and see what the announcement says.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You don't have a clue what is going on.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): "Be patient."

Mr Marchese: I think somewhere in her answer there was an answer, but I must have missed it for sure, and I had these hearing aids to hear it. The minister, as usual, never answers my questions, but I will say this. Mr Cam Jackson, when he was around on that side of the House, used to say around these issues: "I call on the Premier to recognize the fundamental dignity and rights of Ontario's seniors and to move quickly to address their needs. If he does not, he will learn the political lesson that when it comes to the issues of justice for seniors, silence can indeed be fatal." Remember those words, Mr Jackson? I'm sure you do.

I have a supplementary on the issue of the business plan, Mr Speaker. Because this business plan speaks to the issues of the Human Rights Commission and the fact that it will be reviewed—I hope the minister is listening, because she is being distracted.

I remind the minister that they said this before the election around the Human Rights Commission: "A portion of the money saved by winding down the Employment Equity Commission set up to enforce quotas, \$9.3 million, will be redirected to the Human Rights Commission." That was a promise that they made. I want to ask the minister, is she going to keep that promise?

1430

Hon Ms Mushinski: I thought actually the supplementary speech was going to be directed to Minister Jackson. Unfortunately, through all the rhetoric of the member's speech, I had some difficulty fully understanding the very last part of his question because there was a little bit of a blip in my earpiece. I'll do my best through the rhetoric of his question to answer what I think was his question, and I believe that has to do with the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

As the speaker of the question well knows, we have clearly indicated that we are in the process of a complete review of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Ontario Human Rights Code. We are undergoing that review as we speak, and I'm quite sure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Cochrane South.

Hon Ms Mushinski: —this fully with a view to reform and to streamlining the caseloads that clearly have been built up over many years, especially with the previous government. In fact we already have been able to reduce the caseloads.

Ms Lankin: Marilyn, that was embarrassing.

The Speaker: Order. I believe the question has been answered.

Ms Lankin: That was so embarrassing, Marilyn. Hang your head.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Beaches-Woodbine is out of order.

SCHOOL TEACHERS

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, over the last several weeks I have spoken to a number of students, parents and educators in Peel region about the education system. While they may disagree on the type and degree of cost savings that can be made in our schools, they all express their concern over the future of young teachers in the education system. It seems every time there are cutbacks or population trends shift, it is the new teachers with the fresh ideas that are laid off. Minister, what steps are you prepared to take so that young teachers do not continue to bear the brunt of the job losses when budgets must be trimmed?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Mississauga South for the question because I too am concerned about the young teachers in our school system. Over the course of the last few months, I've had a chance to tour a number of schools in this province. As a matter of fact, I spent about 25% of my time in schools, and I've met a number of young teachers who are supplying the vitality

and the energy that's so essential for our education system.

Many of those young teachers are the teachers who are running the innovative programs that really are the future of our education system, and I've seen in the press quotes from students. I have a quote here from a student that says, "It's always sad when you lose teachers, but it's especially sad when you lose young teachers." And a quote from a president of a local OSSTF in part of the province who says, "There's a difference in the vitality and energy that young teachers bring to the job." A local president of the OSSTF said that.

That's why I am pleased—I've been following the layoff notices that boards have given teachers across the province, and I think it's been interesting over the course of the last few weeks that I read reports in the press that those layoff notices may have been greatly exaggerated and in fact the threat to young teachers may be much less than it was before.

I want to point out to the member too that this is not the first time this province has faced a reduction in our system. It was faced in the 1970s, when the baby-boomers came to an end and young teachers lost their jobs because that was part of the agreement between the boards and the local unions. I hope, based on the quote I've just read, perhaps something has been learned, perhaps those boards and the unions who make these seniority decisions will have a thought for those young teachers who are so important for our system.

Mrs Marland: I would say to the minister that there is a correlation between teachers entering the system and those retiring. Minister, given the fact that collective agreements require that younger teachers be the first laid off and also that the number of teachers expected to annually retire under the 90 factor retirement scheme will double in the next 10 years, are you prepared to look at efforts that will ensure that there is an adequate number of young teachers in class gaining experience to meet the education system's needs for the next century?

Hon Mr Snobelen: As I said a moment ago, and as the member has pointed out, these retirement situations are a product of the negotiations between the boards and the unions, and I understand that they will, I would hope, keep in mind that the vitality of our system is in question when we let all of the young teachers go.

I also want to point out that under the retirement factor 90 that's in place, 25% more teachers will be eligible for retirement over the course of the next two years. In fact, that involves 3,500 teachers over the next two years who will become eligible under factor 90 in their pension program.

Unfortunately, in the education system, about half of the people who are eligible to retire choose not to, and of course that causes a real problem for those young people who are entering our system. So I think we'll be looking at ways to help boards when they make the negotiations with unions, to look at the seniority issue, to have that be part of the negotiating process, and also to encourage people to take retirement when it's available to them to protect those younger members of the profession.

DAIRY PRODUCTS

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): In the absence of the Minister of Agriculture, I'll redirect my question to the Minister of Northern Development.

The minister will be aware—at least I hope he will be aware—that the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission has announced some proposed changes to the distribution of milk products throughout northern Ontario. As he may know, these changes will remove all consideration to the producing and processing of milk products in northern Ontario by allowing southern producers to compete in northern communities.

Minister, producers tell me that these changes are being made or have been proposed with little or no public consultation. If they do proceed, we're looking at plant closures and job losses in northern Ontario. I'm looking for assurances from you that these changes will not result in increases to milk and milk products and the closure of the many dairy plants that we have in northern Ontario, which again will lead to job losses.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): As the member opposite alleges that there's been no public consultation, I'll check out that allegation and get back to him.

Mr Miclash: Minister, as the northern representative at the cabinet table, I would hope you would check that out. Residents of northern Ontario, and I'm starting to agree with them, feel that you're not interested in their problems, that your government is not listening and doesn't understand the problems.

We all recognize that change must be made, but what northerners are looking for is involvement in that change, changes that are going to be made that will create job loss in northern Ontario, plant closures in northern Ontario, the increase of prices of milk and milk products.

Minister, will you assure me today that you will perform full public hearings in northern Ontario in regard to this most important matter?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I told the member, I'll check and see if there's been any public consultation, but I want to correct his premise. This government is putting northern development and northern interests at the forefront. Northern Development and Mines, we promised in *A Voice for the North*, would become a lead ministry, and I think you'll seen announcements this spring that will show that is happening.

1440

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. We have good reason to believe and understand that this government intends to change the definition of "disability" for people who qualify for disability assistance in the province. I understand that according to your ministry's business plan, that definition change was targeted for March 1996. It still hasn't come and people who are disabled are becoming more and more anxious. They're having to survive on the welfare assistance that has been cut by your ministry. They don't know what their future holds. When will the minister make clear what the

government's intention is with regard to changes to the definition of "disability," and how many people will be adversely affected by it?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): Firstly, there's been no change to the definition of "disability," so if the leader of the third party is saying that somehow these people who are defined as disabled right now are currently on the GWA system, he knows we expedited through anybody, because of the rate change, and I certainly would like to hear of any circumstance if someone is disabled and still on GWA because they surely should not be there right now. As I said before, we're consulting with the disabled community. This is probably about the tenth time I've—

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Oh, name names.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Name names? This is probably about the tenth time I've stood up and talked about this. Clearly, the reason we are consulting with people is it's necessary for us to work with them to define what they need. Clearly, the old system had too much confusion—the access point to the system. In fact, the prior minister obviously said somewhat the same thing. I agree we have to make the system better, less confusing and provide more services, better services to the disabled community. The direct services are very important.

Mr Wildman: If the minister is indeed consulting, his consultations are wanting and they're leading to more and more anxiety in the disabled community. We understand that according to the business plan of your ministry, you intend to bring in a guaranteed income support plan for the elderly and the disabled. That was also targeted for March 1996, I understand, and it's not here yet.

Can you tell us how the definition of "disabled" will relate to this new program, will there be fewer people eligible for it than are now getting the assistance he just spoke of, and if so, how many fewer? When will we know and when will the disabled community know what kinds of programs are being provided, what the definition will be and how the change in definition will change the numbers who are eligible?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's no surprise to anybody that we are moving the seniors and the disabled off the welfare system. We've clearly made that promise. We'll be doing this shortly. I say to the leader of the third party that he's just going to have to wait and see.

One of the members of the third party was questioning the advisory committee. They wanted me to name some names and I will accommodate them. These are the members of the advisory committee we have been consulting with: Christian Horizons; Federation of Ontario Facility Liaison Groups; Great Lakes Society for Development Services of Ontario; l'Arche Ontario; Metro Agencies Representatives Council, MARC; Ontario Association for Community Living; People First of Ontario; Provincial Coalition on Special Services at Home; and Special Services At Home Family Alliance.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Someone over there in the third party doesn't like the fact we're consulting people. They don't like the obvious list of people I'm advising them are on this advisory committee, and in fact someone

made the disparaging remark, "What about Zellers?" Clearly, we take this seriously. I don't know if they do or not by that comment, but we clearly do. We have a commitment to the disabled community, and that's why we're working with it.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. We ran out of questions today, so I was lucky enough to get fortunately on the list. Mr Minister, there are some concerns with respect to the trustees in the good city of Etobicoke and others in Metropolitan Toronto, and I've heard rumours in Ottawa that there's some concern up there as well with respect to this negative grant stuff.

The question the trustees and homeowners and rate-payers around the city of Etobicoke are putting to me is, there's a question about the permissiveness of this. In effect, if the trustees choose not to adopt your recommendations and not forward you the money, they say they don't have to, or you say they don't have to. Could you point out to me in the legislation exactly how it's worded so that if they refuse that opportunity of funding the money, they don't have to?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Etobicoke West for the question. As the member has pointed out, there is certainly a difference in the way school boards across the province are funded. As a matter of fact, there is considerable difference in the cost or the amount of money boards spend per student on education in this province, from a low of under \$5,000 per student to over \$7,000 per student in some of our more high-spending boards.

Our commitment, which was mentioned in the finance minister's statement on November 29 and which was reified in this chamber only a few weeks ago, is to make sure that our system becomes more equitable in how we fund education in this province. We are in negotiation now and having conversations with our so-called negative grant boards, boards that receive more industrial and commercial tax revenue than other boards do across this province. What we want to do is to allow the province to enter into conversations with all of those boards with the purpose—and I assume this would be the purpose of the members opposite too—of having a fair and equitable education system in the province of Ontario, one that's fair for every student in this province.

Mr Stockwell: I think all members in this House would look for a fair and equitable education system. It's just the definition of "permissive" that's got some people concerned in my riding. Let me give you an analogy that some of the trustees are giving me: Someone goes into a corner store, holds a gun against the clerk's head and says, "Could you please put all the money in this bag?" That's permission to put the money in the bag. The second part is that it goes unsaid that, "If you don't put the money in the bag, I'll blow your head off."

The question the trustees have put to me and I've had this great opportunity today to put to you is: What is the permission? What is permissive? If the trustees and the boards say to them very specifically—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Four, three, two, one.

Mr Stockwell: I guess I've got a countdown from some of the brighter rearguard members.

If there is going to be permissive legislation, if they decide not to give you the money, are they going to then be forced to ante up \$62 million? My constituents don't really feel interested in having their local tax dollar—property taxes—spent funding education systems across the province of Ontario.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to thank the member for a supplemental question. If I have some sense of this, you're wondering about permissiveness. I think the member is probably relating it to sort of like having an invitation from your mother to come by for dinner; you're not sure you can decline it. This is in fact not in that way. There has been some advice to our ministry that legally there needs to be a change in the Education Act so that boards can share with the province, and that's what our intention is.

I want, though, to remind all members of this chamber that there is one taxpayer in this province, that all levels of government are collecting from that same hard-working person who's paying their taxes, whose intention it is to have the children of this province, all of the children of this province, receive a good, high-quality education.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that the North York Branson Hospital merge with the York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

1450

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition, this time from the people of Toronto, who write this petition in regard to rent control, and it reads:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the rent control system;

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing some 3.5 million tenants in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province and preserve rent control."

I signed the petition.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and, operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals;

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and places the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

I affix my name to this petition.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I have a petition signed by concerned citizens in the town of Geraldton, the town of Longlac as far as Thunder Bay. Both Geraldton and Longlac are in the great riding of Lake Nipigon. The petition is addressed to the Ontario Legislature, and reads as follows:

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote,

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government"—those people there—"to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

I have of course affixed my name to this petition.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and also written to the

Honourable Mike Harris, Premier and President of the Executive Council.

"Whereas, as members of this community, we are greatly concerned with the decreasing number of resources and supports available to women. In our society, women occupy a multitude of different roles. They are our mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, friends, colleagues and leaders. They are essential members of our community;

"Whereas some issues that limit a woman's ability to fulfil her role in society are physical abuse, homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness. At present, all these issues are on the rise. In addition, cuts to social assistance, affordable housing, legal aid, child care subsidy and job training have been made. As a result, more women are in need of help and support;

"Whereas women's shelters have the ability to provide services to address these health issues. Many shelters not only provide food, clothing and a place to stay but also provide life skills training, counselling, educational and recreational programs, support groups and outreach. Housing/medical/psychiatric referrals, family/social support networking, aftercare and vocational counselling are provided as well;

"Whereas a shelter's ability to provide these services depends upon the resources available to them. It is economically more beneficial to maintain these services by providing them with adequate funding for resources. The services shelters provide empower women to gain control, autonomy and self-reliance. Only then can all women learn to help themselves and become self-sufficient. In turn, self-sufficiency helps women to permanently exit the social assistance program through employment;

"Whereas women who are economically stable can raise themselves and their children above the poverty line; poverty has been known to create multiple health problems. Therefore, a decrease in poverty will result in a decrease in the total cost of the health care system;

"Whereas women have the right to be safe and free, therefore we advocate for full funding of women's emergency and second-level shelters with services offering education, counselling and outreach. Full funding is not only beneficial, it is essential."

The petition has been signed by several hundred people and I add my name to this petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a petition signed by about 156 people in the riding of Dovercourt and throughout Metropolitan Toronto which reads as follows:

"Whereas the government's 21.6% cut in welfare payments and cuts to programs such as day care, women's shelters and non-profit housing are causing serious economic hardship to the most vulnerable in our society;

"Whereas the government's proposed reductions in income tax rates will be most beneficial to the most economically advantaged society;

"Whereas there is no evidence that such tax cuts would significantly increase private spending, therefore stimulating job creation;

"Whereas the deficit problem that the government claims to be addressing with social program cuts will only be worsened by such tax cuts;

"Whereas tax reductions in the face of severe social program cuts amount to taking from the poor and unemployed and giving to the rich;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"No tax cuts should be approved until measures have been taken to address the economic insecurity of the poor and unemployed and until the Ontario budget has been balanced."

I have attached my name to this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas high-quality child care contributes significantly to the healthy development of all children;

"Whereas research has proven that good wages and working conditions for early childhood educators are a key factor in high-quality care;

"Whereas the best child care system is one that is accessible, affordable and regulated for quality;

"Whereas recent cuts to child care are destabilizing the entire child care system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all public funding be restored for child care, including subsidies, capital funds, operating grants and all-day junior kindergarten, pilot projects and programs;

"That all existing commitments regarding wage subsidies, pay equity programs and other funding programs and/or policies that help to stabilize high-quality child care for children and families in the province of Ontario be retained, and

"That public hearings be held as part of the child care service review process."

I add my name to this petition.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This is signed by 15 residents of Barry's Bay. I have affixed my signature as well.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure today to rise and present a petition from a Mrs Dingman in my riding of Durham East.

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has recently received the Golden report on the GTA reform; and

"Whereas the impact on our tax dollars means we will bail out Toronto;

"Therefore, the people of Durham East have taken up the following petition:

"If you are concerned about the GTA and the Toronto tax grab, please sign below and we will take this petition to our MPP, John O'Toole, to present to our government at Queen's Park."

I present and sign my name to this petition.

1500

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations that will run them for profit; and

"Whereas after the corporate takeover it will be strictly user-pay for the services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and worker safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars, even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating its privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the sell-off of Ontario's public services and reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

CHILD CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It is lengthy, so I'll only read a couple of the paragraphs.

"Whereas the government is intent on cutting educational funding so that children are denied their basic right to quality education, and whereas the government cuts to day care facilities restrict parents' access to affordable and decent child care programs within the province;

"Whereas the government has seen fit to abandon job training programs and failed to create a formal jobs strategy for the province, despite continually high unemployment,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly and the Mike Harris government to live up to their promises of protecting rent controls, not introducing user fees, and creating over 725,000 jobs in the province."

I will assign my signature.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I present a petition signed by over 600 citizens.

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote,

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government led by David Peterson raised taxes 33 times between 1985 and 1990;

"Whereas the NDP government led by Bob Rae raised taxes 32 times;

"Whereas the last income tax increase introduced under the previous NDP government actually brought in significantly less money to the province of Ontario;

"Whereas high taxes kill jobs;

"Whereas cutting taxes creates jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to keep their election commitment to cut provincial income taxes by 30% to create jobs in the private sector for the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition which reads:

"The government of Ontario is planning to implement tax cuts that will benefit well-off people, while at the same time they have cut incomes to the poor, and 46% of Ontario families make less than \$35,000 per year but will get only 7.3% of the benefits of the proposed tax cuts, which would amount to about \$462 a year. Families with total incomes of over \$95,000 a year make up only 9.2% of all Ontario families, but they will get 32.7% of the benefits. In these tough times it is unconscionable that the poor will go hungry while the wealthy are given more.

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a petition that's been given to me by Conscientious Objectors to the War Against the Poor, an organization which is being coordinated by Citizens for Public Justice and the Interfaith Social Assistance Review Committee. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it says:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

That's signed by Marilyn Leslie of Woodcroft Crescent in Welland, Betty Rose of Fitch Street, Eva Smith of

Church Street, Eric Roberts of Fitch Street and a whole lot of other folks in Welland-Thorold. I put my name on it and I present it to you now, Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS, 1996
CHARTRE DES DROITS DES PATIENTS DE 1996

Mrs Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 41, An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario / Projet de loi 41, Loi visant à protéger les droits des personnes qui reçoivent des services de santé en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Would you like to say a few remarks?

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia): Yes. I'll be very brief. I know this is not my opportunity to speak to the bill. This is an act which brings together all of the different rights which presently exist in other legislation in the province. As well, it attempts to educate the public as well as providers, professionals, to know what their rights are both as they deliver service and as they receive services. It will be debated shortly during private members' hour, and I do hope members will decide to support this very important piece of legislation.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WANT OF CONFIDENCE MOTION

Mr Wildman moved, pursuant to standing order 43(a), want of confidence motion number 2:

Whereas the government has reaffirmed its commitment to both balance the budget and implement a 30% reduction in personal income taxes; and

Whereas economic growth in Ontario is predicted to continue to be weak at 2.3%, much lower than the government's assumptions in the Common Sense Revolution; and

Whereas the current unemployment rate for the province stands at 8.9% and the employment outlook given the low growth rate is expected to continue to weaken over the next year; and

Whereas the cuts to government spending were cited by the witnesses at the pre-budget hearings of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs as the major contributor to the poor economic performance and loss of jobs; and

Whereas by cutting personal income taxes to capture the tax savings published in the Common Sense Revolution, the government will lose \$27.8 billion in revenue by the year 2000; and

Whereas in order to balance the budget as promised in the Common Sense Revolution the government will have to implement further spending cuts, which will affect children, senior citizens, and other vulnerable Ontarians; and

Whereas the cost of such a tax cut, which is to reduce the percentage of basic federal tax by 20 points, will add

an extra \$16.5 billion to the accumulated debt of the province; and

Whereas fully two thirds of the value of the tax cut will go to the top 10% of income earners and will do nothing to increase consumer spending; and

Whereas witnesses at the pre-budget committee hearings agreed that the Common Sense Revolution's promise of 725,000 new jobs is unrealistic and unattainable; and

Whereas the government has refused to listen to expert witnesses, the people of the province and has refused to pay attention to the reality of Ontario's economic situation;

Therefore, pursuant to the provisions of standing order 43(a), the House no longer has confidence in the government.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): I believe we have all-party support for dividing the time equally.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'm pleased to be able to put forward for debate today this motion which demonstrates our complete lack of confidence in this government and its economic approach. The Conservative government is involved in mathematical hocus-pocus. It has on the one hand confirmed a commitment to balance the budget, but on the other hand to implement a 30% reduction in personal income taxes and to create, over five years, 725,000 new jobs.

However, as we point out, economic growth in Ontario is predicted to continue to be weak at 2.3%, much lower than the government's assumptions in its campaign document, the so-called Common Sense Revolution. The current unemployment rate for the province stands at 8.9%, and the unemployment outlook, related to the low growth in the economy, is expected to continue to weaken over the next year.

1510

A key indication of the economic health of a community is the number of people who have full-time, permanent jobs. The more people who are employed, the more money is circulating in the economy, creating more demand and more jobs. Ontario's economic picture is bleak. The unemployment rate is very high and it continues to remain so. Unfortunately, unemployment among our youth is particularly high and more young people are unemployed today than they were a year ago in Ontario.

The government has recently made much of the fact, and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism has made much of the fact that the latest job creation numbers show a net increase of 31,000 new jobs. The problem is that the minister, whenever he touts this in this House, leaves out the fact that the labour force participation rate has grown by 38,000 in the same period. The February figures really reveal a net increase in unemployment in Ontario of 7,000 people and the government's own numbers indicate that the number of people unemployed in 1996 will actually increase, not decrease.

So far, the average growth in jobs for the first two months of 1996 is 42,000, but at the same time the number of people unemployed in this province has grown

by 20,000. Yet this government claims they will be successful in creating 725,000 new jobs over the period of their government mandate.

In the recent debate in this House, the member for Brampton North, I believe, made much of the fact that this government is promising a tax break which will stimulate employment, that the tax cuts that are promised will be the economic engine that will produce jobs in the province. But even he, in his speech, admitted that if he's correct, if the government is right, the actual number of jobs that will be created will not take effect for two to three years after the tax cut. It's not just me saying this, it was a member of the government party.

He argued, interestingly enough, at that time that the reason the government is looking at a tax cut for the personal income tax rate rather than something like other types of taxes, like the sales tax, for instance, was that a cut in the provincial sales tax would create a bulge in consumer spending, that there would be a rush of consumers to spend because of a cut in the sales tax, but that would simply mean consumer spending would be bunched together and that later on it would fall off. That's why he felt an income tax cut was the best way to go; the problem being, of course, that while there might be a bulge in retail sales if we have a retail sales tax cut immediately, it would not be long term, but the cuts that are being proposed by this government in income tax rates would not take effect for two or three years.

I think we should keep that in mind as we look at whether or not this motion should be passed by the House. I hope all members of the House will look at this very carefully. The latest growth projections of this government are that the best that can be achieved in terms of jobs over the next two years is 81,000 for 1996 and 100,000 for 1997. That would require an average GNP growth of over 6% a year. No one in the province, none of the people who appeared before the pre-budget hearings of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, predicted a 6% growth rate, none of the economists or anyone else who appeared, and frankly, neither is this government projecting that kind of growth over the long term.

The current economic growth is much slower than expected. One year ago, forecasters were predicting that the Ontario economy would grow by 4.5% for 1995. However, performance was much less than what was expected. When the final figures come in—they aren't in yet—1995 is expected to have experienced an increase in economic growth of only 2.5%.

Each of the experts who appeared before the legislative committee, including the government's own witness from Canada Trust, said the Mike Harris spending cuts are having a negative impact on retail sales and on jobs, that they are dragging down the whole economy of the province. It's significant that the witness who was proposed by government members in that committee agreed with that position. I'll give you a quote from Patti Croft of Canada Trust:

"Ontario is attempting to downsize government's share of the GDP in the province at a time of relatively weak economic activity. I think that this does run the risk of tipping the province into a period of sustained sluggish

growth." This is a witness who appeared before the committee at the request of the government members of the committee predicting sluggish growth for the economy of the province, and yet the government seems hell-bent on continuing the approach it's taken with regard to the tax cut.

The irony of this position is that the spending cuts are causing the downturn in the economy, the drag on the economy, and the uncertainty of consumers is hurting consumer spending. Any tax cut is going to require further cuts in spending unless the deficit has declined substantially, or we're going to just borrow all the money for the tax cut. The cuts in themselves and the unemployment they're causing are producing the vulnerability and the feeling of concern and uncertainty that are leading to slow consumer spending.

You can't just say there'll be growth, when in fact consumers are not spending at the rates this government had predicted. The tax cut is supposed to be an economic stimulus, but the spending cuts that are required to allow the government to proceed with it are having the opposite impact on the economy and on consumer spending.

The government's rhetoric includes a statement that growth is fuelled by the tax cut and that there will be increases in revenues to pay for the tax cut and create the 725,000 jobs. In fact, the only fiscal stimulus this government is proposing is the tax cut, but this approach is based simply on the belief in the tax cut. The government has taken a leap of faith and is asking everybody in Ontario to follow that approach, to take that same leap of faith. This is an ideological rather than an economic approach to dealing with the economy of the province.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Like Ronald Reagan.

Mr Wildman: My colleague says it's like Ronald Reagan. When people point to Reagan's approach, members of this government will say: "Wait a minute. Ronald Reagan didn't cut spending. The Congress didn't go along with his proposals to cut, and besides that, Ronald Reagan, the President himself, significantly increased defence spending."

I was on a panel recently with the member for Halton Centre, who said we should be looking at the Kennedy cut in the 1960s rather than at the Reagan cuts in the 1980s. There is a significant difference. At the time of the Kennedy cuts for taxes in the 1960s there was tremendous optimism. There was tremendous growth taking place in the economy generally. There was tremendous economic expansion related partly to the expansion of the war effort. There was also a significant amount of consumer spending. There wasn't the uncertainty at the time that Kennedy brought in his tax cuts. There wasn't the concern by consumers. Consumers were spending. Consumers are not spending now, and I think it is more appropriate for us to look at the Reagan situation rather than the proposed Kennedy cuts.

1520

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): If a tax cut is bad, are tax increases good?

Mr Wildman: We aren't advocating that.

Mr Laughren: You support an increase in softwood lumber taxes.

Mr Wildman: And you're taking the revenue.

It's not just me who's saying this. Obviously, the committee invited all sorts of experts to appear before the committee and the committee prepared a report. What did the report state? It says, "If the overall effect is negative, the government may see the same kind of revenue losses (through unemployment and lower consumption) it was seeing earlier in this decade, and ultimately, a deterioration in the deficit situation." That's a quote from the report.

Obviously, that report was prepared by research for the committee, but the committee members could have changed it, and if they didn't change it, they must be in agreement with it. Otherwise, I suppose they could have brought in a minority report, if there had been a minority of members who didn't support the report. But I don't remember hearing or seeing the government members bring in any kind of disagreement with that statement that the amount of unemployment that is being produced by these cuts and the lack of consumption may be exacerbated by this government's approach and we may see a deterioration of the deficit situation in Ontario.

The proposal of the Harris government basically is that while it provides some economic stimulus through a tax cut, the tax cut does not make up for the downturn caused by the spending cuts and, furthermore, the spending cuts are required to implement the tax cuts. It's a circular argument. What we are concerned about on this side of the House is not only what the overall effect would be of the spending cuts that are forced because of the commitment to a tax cut, but who will benefit.

It's obviously the case that the wealthiest in this province will be the only ones who will really benefit from a tax cut, that the lower- and middle-income earners will not benefit very much, if at all. The problem with that is that we are hurting the most vulnerable in making the cuts in order to produce a tax cut that will benefit only a very small group at the very top of the income scale.

The committee showed that more than half of the total cut will go to families with annual incomes of over \$90,000; the cost of the tax cut, \$5 billion in lost revenue to the provincial government, to benefit the top 10% of income earners. At the same time this government, to help pay for that tax cut, has cut welfare rates by 22%, which has had a devastating effect on the families dependent on those welfare payments, but the whole approach also has a devastating effect on the economy.

If you give a tax cut to a very small group of people, their spending will not significantly affect the overall consumption rates in the province, while at the same time the government has cut significantly to the poorest in our economy, the people who spend the vast majority of their income, if not all of it. They are spending less while the wealthy, who are going to benefit from a tax cut, are not going to be spending significantly more. Our position and the reason we have no confidence in this government's approach is that we believe the tax cut will not make up for the spending cuts in our economy.

While the tax cut might produce as many as 50,000 jobs, the cuts in government programs and the public service will cost 145,000 to 175,000 jobs. There will be

a combined net loss in jobs in this province of between 95,000 and 125,000 jobs. This doesn't mean 725,000 new jobs being produced in this province; it means fewer jobs, it means more unemployment, it means less consumer spending, it means more misery and more poverty in the province, and at the same time we're making major cuts in programs that are designed to help people who are experiencing poverty in order to finance a program that is going to put more people in poverty.

Now what about the deficit reduction? The government has a mantra where the ministers day after day will get up in this House and say, "We've got to make these cuts to services and to programs, to government expenditures, because there is a significant deficit and we've got to bring the deficit down."

The Minister of Finance repeatedly states, and he said again today, that the cuts that have been made so far and that are currently being contemplated by government ministries have nothing to do with the tax cut, that they're completely separate from the tax cut, that they only have to do with the deficit.

Let's look at this seriously. If you're dealing with the cuts in programs just to cut the deficit, even if we accept that, surely if you also bring in a tax cut, that's also going to affect the deficit. You can't say it has nothing to do with it. Of course it's related. It's all part of the same package—revenue and expenditures.

By cutting personal income taxes to make up for the commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution, the government will lose \$27.8 billion in revenue by the year 2000. The cost of the tax cut, which is to reduce the percentage of basic federal tax by 20 points, will add an extra \$16.5 billion to the accumulated debt of the province. Whether the Minister of Finance likes to agree or not, the fact is, by taking away revenue over a period of time, we are going to significantly increase the accumulated debt in Ontario.

It's not just us that's saying that. The Dominion Bond Rating Service has said, "The promised 30% reduction in personal income taxes is the single biggest hurdle to balancing the budget." It's not just us saying that you shouldn't be bringing in the tax cut. These are people who look at budgets, who look at deficits, who look at government expenditures and make recommendations with regard to bond rates and to interest rates on government borrowing that determine whether it's going to be easier or more difficult for the government to borrow. They're saying this doesn't make sense. They're saying if you reduce your income taxes by that rate, inevitably the budget is not going to be balanced.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Why didn't you listen to them when you were in for five years? They told you not to spend like you did.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke West, please.

Mr Wildman: As a matter of fact the member, who is not in his seat, knows full well that over the last two years of our mandate we spent less year over year for the first time of any government of any political stripe since 1945.

This is a government, this Conservative government, which says it is committed to doing three different things

that do not go together at all. They're saying they're going to reduce the deficit by spending cuts; they're going to reduce significantly the revenue the provincial government receives from tax revenue; the deficit isn't going to climb and they're going to create new jobs by laying people off. This is what they're saying they're going to do.

In fact what they're doing is they're decimating the revenue base of the government, and the economy is going to stagger from one cut to another. Poverty is increasing, the government is creating poverty in the province, and revenue will decline further. That's why we don't have confidence in the government's approach.

Usually Tories would argue that the only way to cut the deficit is to cut government expenditures. I could understand a Conservative government making the argument that we have to cut expenditures, and the Treasurer has made that argument. But inevitably, by cutting expenditures, cutting programs, downsizing government, that means laying people off, and I understand tomorrow there's going to be the announcements of the layoffs in the public sector, in the public service. When those people are laid off and they go on unemployment insurance, they're not going to be paying taxes. The revenue base is going to go down. They won't be spending money the way they would be or perhaps would be if they were in employment, so jobs will be lost in the private sector.

1530

This government has refused to listen. It's not just that they haven't listened to the opposition. I don't expect they're going to take this motion seriously and pass it today, but I hope they will. But it's not just us they haven't listened to. They haven't listened to the people who appeared before the committee, even their own witness.

Mr Stockwell: Who?

Mr Wildman: The witness from Canada Trust, who the people who are members of the government on the committee requested come before the committee. The representative from Canada Trust said, "I think that this"—meaning the government's approach—"does run the risk of tipping the province into a period of sustained sluggish growth." Sluggish.

In my view, there were also many, many other witnesses before the committee who recommended against the tax cut—many, many—and this government refused to listen to any of them. They were not all proposed by our party or the Liberal Party; in fact a lot of them came forward because they are known to have significant expertise in economic development and consumer spending, government spending issues, so they came and made their presentations.

The government didn't listen to any of them. It's typical. The government hasn't listened to the people out there on the street who are out of work, the people who have been wiped off the welfare rolls and disappeared. We don't know where they went. The government isn't trying to figure out what happened to them.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): They got jobs.

Mr Wildman: Well, we hope they got jobs. All of us hope they got jobs. Some of them may have got jobs, but how many of us have walked down the street in Toronto—

Mr Stockwell: Just to spite us they turned the cheque down.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Etobicoke West, I would ask you to refrain from heckling, please.

Mr Wildman: I don't find him provoking at all, particularly when he's not in his seat. When he's in his seat, he bothers me.

Seriously, how many of us over the years have either lived in Toronto or have visited Toronto on a regular basis and we see the numbers of people who are sitting there on the street on cold nights in sleeping bags. I can remember when I first used to come down here, back in 1975, when that was really an unusual thing. You saw it once in a while, but it was really unusual. Now it's not only not unusual; if you were to walk down Yonge Street on any evening during the week, it would be surprising if you didn't see somebody in that state.

All I'm saying is that poverty is increasing in this province, and cutting programs and cutting people off welfare doesn't necessarily mean, as one of your members said, they got jobs. Some of those people, perhaps a large percentage of those people, are ending up out there on the street with no means of support, and that's not the kind of Ontario that we want or I think that anybody wants. Frankly, it's not the kind of Ontario I would hope that most members of the government would want.

I would predict that a very large number of those people will not have jobs at the end of this government's mandate, because this government's program inevitably means fewer jobs, not more jobs. In three years as many as 125,000 jobs will be lost from the government's actions. That's how many jobs will be lost, much less dealing with the fact that they are not doing anything really to create new jobs despite their promise of 725,000 new jobs.

In the meantime, the government is decimating the social safety net in this province. We are facing a situation where we have a government that is motivated by ideology, that does not want to be confused with facts, that is serving the self-interest of a very small, wealthy minority in the province, that is more concerned about whether or not they are properly communicating their program than about doing things in a way that will benefit the economy of the province, will provide stimulus at a time of very slow growth and will provide the jobs that we all need and we all desire.

We run the risk in this province of having a generation of young people the vast majority of whom will never have found a permanent job. They will have done all of the things they're supposed to have done: They'll have completed school, they'll have gotten the job training they have been told they require, they'll have gone to college or university, they'll graduate, and the best they can hope for, it appears, is short-term contracts with no commitment to be able to develop a long-term career plan.

We have many people who are sitting here saying, "That's not the case." Well, if you go back to your communities, how many young people between the ages of 18 and 30 will you find who do not have permanent jobs, who are actively looking for work and have been

looking for work for years, who may have gotten short-term contracts but have not gotten any long-term employment? That doesn't just have ramifications for them—it does, obviously—it has ramifications, we believe, for our whole society. It is not healthy for society.

This government continues with its mantra about raising taxes, raising debt. The irony of this is that nobody is suggesting they should raise taxes. Everyone agrees we should be working on the deficit. But it is the government that is determined to decrease taxes at a time when they will need that revenue if they are really committed to lowering the deficit. They're going to end up having to increase the debt of the province to provide a tax break to the 10% wealthiest people in the province.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): It goes to everybody.

Mr Wildman: The break goes to everyone, but 66% of the tax reduction goes to the top 10% of income earners in the province, and they're not going to benefit.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): They'll all get it.

Mr Wildman: Yes, a few hundred dollars.

Mr Young: That's a lot to them.

Mr Wildman: A lot to them? Well, it may be. They may in fact go on a holiday for a long weekend somewhere or they may pay down some of their debt with this few hundred dollars, but it's not going to do anything to stimulate the economy and put those people who are out on the street back to work. It isn't going to do a thing.

I hope this government will rethink its position, at least rethink the commitment to this 30% tax break for the wealthy, since it is not going to benefit the economy in general, it isn't going to stimulate the jobs, it isn't going to produce the jobs the government has promised, and it's going to make it far more difficult for the government to deal with the deficit.

I urge the people in this House to support our motion. We have no confidence in this government's approach. We don't have confidence that this government is prepared to listen to what people are saying in Ontario, we don't have any confidence that they will act responsibly, and we are very concerned that the economy will be hurt by the approach of the government and that the social fabric will be destroyed by the government's actions. For those reasons, I urge all members of the House to support this motion of want of confidence in this government's economic approach.

1540

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): I am speaking today against the resolution by the member for Algoma. This NDP resolution attempts a vote of non-confidence in a government that won the confidence of the people in Ontario just nine months ago. This NDP resolution opposes a tax cut that the voters of Ontario voted for overwhelmingly just last June. In fact, this resolution put forward by the member for Algoma is the antithesis of the will and the testament of the people of Ontario.

While it is the legislative job of the opposition to oppose, it is the job of a democratically elected government to govern within the framework of its mandate. Where it is the legislative duty of the opposition to examine and improve legislation, it should carry out that

honourable task without undermining the legitimacy of the last election and without resorting to total distortions of fact, as this resolution does.

First, the economic outlook and the employment picture for Ontario is not gloomy, as the NDP resolution suggests. After five years of NDP misrule, during which Ontario's economy went into a tailspin, the overall economic prospects today are good. Ontario gained 123,000 new manufacturing jobs in 1995, 65,000 jobs in the last six months alone. This tells me that we are on the right track.

The economic prospect for the year ahead is optimistic for Ontario, mostly because of our government's economic plans. In this regard, this NDP resolution distorts what economic experts and business leaders told the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, and what they are telling the Minister of Finance and myself in ongoing pre-budget consultations.

As Catherine Swift, the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says, "We believe that cutting taxes and balancing the budget will improve Ontario's competitive position, which will enhance our attractiveness as a place to invest and do business and provide a direct boost to job creation." The Royal Bank, Canada Trust and many others concurred with that statement.

Some groups, such as Canada Trust, already see positive signs and results of this government's actions because "international markets"—and I'm quoting Patti Croft—"are already treating Ontario's debt as if it had been upgraded."

Since we are on the subject of public hearings, the NDP resolution also completely distorts reality in its assumption that this government is not consulting with the public about the budget. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, I have heard 78 submissions to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, from a broad range of individuals and organizations and unions.

Besides this, as I already mentioned, the minister has heard, and continues to hear, pre-budget submissions from additional groups every week. Because of his desire to hear from as many people as possible who have suggestions about cost-saving measures and innovative moves, I am working with other members of our caucus to coordinate pre-budget consultations in ridings right across the province. Each of my colleagues is conducting extensive consultations on the budget in his or her own ridings. The recommendations they collect will be presented to the minister at a meeting later this month.

In my own riding of St Andrew-St Patrick, for example, I have been holding round table pre-budget discussions with local groups on education, culture, small business, health, seniors, child care and people in the hospitality industry. I have already met with representatives from more than 100 groups and organizations to date. Gary Stewart, the member for Peterborough, has been holding similar meetings; so have many other of my colleagues. I say to my colleague across the floor, I have no idea who fed you that information that we weren't consulting with the people of Ontario, because we are.

This NDP resolution is equally wrong in presuming that the promised cuts in personal income taxes may cost

the provincial treasury \$27.8 billion by the end of the year 2000. Experience in other jurisdictions proves that when taxes are cut, government revenues increase. It's worth noting that the share of taxes paid by higher-income earners also increases because of the added incentive of lower taxes, which encourages these people to produce more income for us to tax. This has been well documented in several studies.

The NDP resolution is, again, wrong to presume that a tax cut would need more expenditure cuts, and it is resorting to fearmongering in suggesting that it might "affect children, senior citizens, and other vulnerable Ontarians." Honesty demands that we all realize that what has hurt vulnerable Ontarians the most are the high deficit and high debt, which have hobbled government right across Canada, and in Ontario are costing us 19 cents out of every dollar in interest payments alone. If we don't act now to curb our spending and to cut back, we will continue to see more money go that could be going to the needy. This government's plan of reducing government spending and government deficit on the one hand and of giving a tax break to citizens on the other holds the best promise of economic recovery and job creation for Ontario.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business just finished a province-wide survey of small businesses, asking them about the government's proposed cut in provincial income taxes. It received 2,800 responses and 80% of them said that they see nothing but positive effects from this policy—80% of small businesses. How can a measure that is liked by 80% of people be so opposed by a party that purports to speak for working men and women? More than 27% of businesses said that they would likely hire more people once they get the proposed tax cut.

Applying these survey results to the business sector as a whole would suggest that, conservatively, 80,000 businesses would likely increase employment. That's 80,000 companies creating more jobs. The federation said: "Business in the retail and hospitality sectors, which would experience the most direct benefits from increased consumer spending, would be among the most likely to increase their employment levels. In addition, relatively strong employment impacts would flow through to the manufacturing, construction and wholesale sectors." Such is the air of expectancy right across the land about this government's proposed tax cut, a measure that the NDP is opposing.

Whereas the people of Ontario have hit a tax wall and are waiting for some relief and businesses are waiting for a return of consumer confidence, the NDP is saying through this resolution that the current rate of high taxation is fine. This is surprising. Considering governments everywhere in the United States and all across Canada, including the federal Liberal government and two NDP governments, in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, now readily acknowledge the need to control the deficit, the need to cut back government and to provide some tax relief, the NDP in Ontario seems stuck in the past. The NDP in Ontario likes big government and it likes high taxes. When the next election comes around, the voters of Ontario will no doubt remember that the

NDP fought for keeping the taxes and fought against lowering the provincial income taxes for people across this province.

I find this highly ironic, because almost every day in the Legislature the NDP is stretching its credibility, trying to make the point that this government is breaking this or that promise. Yet here we are with the NDP urging the government to break its most popular pledge: to give Ontarians a tax break that they need and want and that Ontario needs to get the economy going again.

To summarize: Small business wants tax cuts; the NDP does not want tax cuts. The people of Ontario voted for tax cuts; the NDP does not want what the people of Ontario want. Worse, the NDP wants this government to break its promise to the people. But this government has a duty to fulfil its mandate and it has every intention of doing so. So I do not support this motion.

1550

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm rising to speak in support of this motion because I think it embodies a lot of what many people in Ontario, upon reflection, are thinking about this government at this point in time. The very fact that this government would be embarking upon what I can only refer to as a reckless tax cut—and I get that terminology from one of the respected members of the Legislature. The member for Wellington, Ted Arnott, as he would be known to his friends in Wellington, wrote a letter to the Premier and indicated that this was a reckless tax cut. Here's a person who has been in this Legislature. His predecessor was a very commonsense individual by the name of Jack Johnson.

Mr Wildman: A good guy.

Mr Bradley: A very good individual. These are people who have been attuned to what's going on out there. When he refers to it as reckless, I can only agree with him. I know other members of the caucus—the member for Etobicoke West, Chris Stockwell; the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Morley Kells, a former cabinet minister; and the member for Grey-Owen Sound, who in his own riding is known as Bill Murdoch—were also opposed to it. These are people who are attuned to what people are saying in their constituencies.

While they are small-c conservatives, each one of them, they recognize that this is not even good conservative economics. They've obviously talked to the same kinds of economists I have, who are small-c conservative. I'm not talking about Neil Brooks, who's a left-winger from York University. I'm not talking about any of that crowd. I'm talking about conservative economists who will tell you this just doesn't make sense.

What we are doing is having drastic cuts—deep, drastic, rapid cuts—in so many areas of endeavour on the part of the government that the government has not examined the ramifications of these cuts. If you asked virtually anybody in the province, "Do you think that governments have to become more efficient? Do you think that governments have to trim their expenditures?" the NDP would agree with that, the Liberals would agree, I'm sure all Conservatives would and most people would. The real question is how quickly you're going, how drastically you're going and what you have selected for

your cuts, and also the fact that the cuts are going to cost the people of this province, in terms of additional borrowing, over \$20 billion.

When you say to some people who like government cuts and don't care how fast they're coming or how drastic those cuts are, when you say to those people the government's going to do that, it's going to do this cutting and it's going to give a tax cut, they're accepting of that. When you explain to them that the government's going to have to borrow more than an additional \$20 billion when it's said the problem is the deficit—and it is found right in the Common Sense Revolution. People say, "Where do you get this?" Right in the Common Sense Revolution. This is the document put out by the Conservatives. It says that the government will have to, as a result, borrow more than an additional \$20 billion when I was told and I believe that the deficit is a challenge for us to meet.

Why then would the government want to get into unnecessarily borrowing more money? Some on the opposite side would say it will stimulate the economy. Again, talk to the economists, talk to the people who are quite small-c conservative on these matters. They will tell you that if you apply the balanced budget multiplier or if you apply thoughts and policies related to that, you will see it doesn't work.

Let me say as plainly as I can that the combination of deep cuts in government expenditures and a deep tax cut at the same time produces very little, if any, stimulus to the economy and will cost you over \$20 billion in additional borrowing. Even Lorrie Goldstein—I don't think Lorrie Goldstein of the Toronto Sun could be described as a raving liberal or a wild socialist; he is a small-c conservative thinker—has produced a column in which he questions the wisdom of the tax cut at this time when we're having such drastic cuts in so many areas of endeavour in the province, and I happen to agree with him on that particular issue.

We also do this in the context of a situation in Ontario where we have some corporations that are making unprecedented profits while at the same time they're turfing people out on to the streets, into the unemployment lines.

Now with the government, the government says it's not making money so it has to reduce its expenditures. These corporations that are making this kind of money, particularly the banks, are at the same time significantly reducing their staff and putting people out of jobs. At Davos in Switzerland where the great minds of economics and finance gathered together, including our Premier of this province, they talked about this very problem, and people from all over the industrialized and modern world, in terms of economics, recognize this is a problem that must be addressed, and I hope the government will be doing that, as all of us will.

We've already had the cuts. Some people say, "Well, there haven't been cuts." The NDP in power, outside of their first year, spent the rest of the time cutting the expenditures of this province. Do you know, for instance, that the complement of civil servants, the number of civil servants of this province, at this time, is almost precisely the same as it was in the last year of the Davis Progressive Conservative government? It did rise; it did go down.

The NDP went through a process of some very painful cuts, I'm sure painful to my friends in the NDP who did not want to raise tuition by 42% when they were in fact opposed to tuition at all. But those were the realities of the time when we saw the various ministries having to reduce the services they provided.

What we're seeing now are unprecedented kinds of cuts, cuts for instance that are now resulting in many front-line educators losing their jobs, particularly as was noted today, the younger teachers in the profession, who do not have a chance to be part of the system because of the drastic cuts that are taking place, despite the fact the government promised there would be no cuts to classroom education.

Developmentally disabled individuals in this province are going to receive less in the way of resources from the government. I know for instance that the sheltered workshop in St Catharines on Bunting Road is being phased out and that those people are being sent elsewhere, an opportunity for people to play a meaningful role in our society.

We're seeing this time after time where these cuts are hurting vulnerable people in our province. We're seeing public transportation services being lost for those who can't afford vehicles, who rely on public transportation. We're seeing junior kindergarten being eliminated in place after place in Ontario, when we recognize that the benefits of junior kindergarten are just beginning to be known by experts in the field, and we recognize how important junior kindergarten is to those young people and their families.

The special education services: The people who work with those who used to be kept outside the regular classroom, in separate classrooms, who are now allowed into the regular classroom, but need those to be with them to assist them, that service is being cut.

We hear of a speculated 20% increase in tuition for students in post-secondary education at the very time when it is very difficult for those people to obtain jobs. We see staff and resources being reduced at the Ministry of Environment and Energy, when we see the vulnerability of our water supplies in various parts of the province and many of the other programs being cut back because of reduced staff, reduced enforcement and reduced resources available.

We see on a very visual basis and can feel the deterioration of our infrastructure, particularly the roads in this province which are now a disgrace. As people enter the province of Ontario from New York state or from the province of Quebec, from Manitoba and from other places, the first greeting they get now is a pothole inside a pothole, and this has become extremely serious.

We see now that the province is cutting the progressive tax, that is the income tax, by 30%, benefiting the most wealthy in our society, in order to transfer that obligation to the local tax which is the most regressive tax, the property tax, or individual user fees which do not take into account a person's ability to pay.

We see deep cuts in hospital services, fewer nurses on the floors, fewer kinds of services available within the hospitals in these circumstances. We see crown attorneys now going to be cut back so there will be a backlog in

the courts. We may find a situation where people are going to have their cases dismissed simply because they've not come to trial quickly enough.

1600

We have seen the potential firing of up to 27,000 provincial civil servants, and thousands more at the local agencies, boards, commissions and municipalities.

We see deregulation coming forward. You saw what happened with deregulation in the meat industry in Great Britain. That's just one example, when you start deregulating, of what happens. It isn't that these regulations are there particularly to be onerous; they're there because there was a need for those that was recognized by people in this province.

In Toronto and Ottawa now, as the member for Etobicoke West said today, we see that the property taxes are being robbed from people in Metropolitan Toronto and metropolitan Ottawa in order to take those property taxes and move those around the province, which of course is unfair to those municipalities.

And so we see the kinds of cuts that are hurtful to this province. We see that what doesn't make sense is a tax cut, and that's why I believe this particular motion should be supported. What we need now is common sense in this province. That means a postponement of a tax cut until such time as we can actually afford it in this province, because it isn't going to be as stimulative as the government hopes. We need to restore some of the funding—not all of it, but some of the funding—which is essential for the life of people in our province.

I do not look forward to this being New Jersey North. I admire some things about the United States, but there are many things I do not admire, and I do not want to see our province transformed into Tennessee, Mississippi or Arkansas North. I hope the government will reconsider its position as a result of the requests that are made and the excellent arguments that are made by those who are in opposition to government policy.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Mr Speaker, it will come as no surprise to you that I will be supporting this non-confidence motion. I want to say to the members opposite that this is one of the most troubling aspects of the government's agenda, the almost sort of blind faith that the members opposite put in their cabinet's assertions that this tax cut will somehow stimulate the economy, that it won't cause any further economic harm to our economy, that jobs will be created, that it won't cause any further cuts. The back and forth that we hear and that we see and the extraordinary statements that the Premier has made recently with respect to this are without any credence, and yet the members opposite blindly accept these comments and smile and nod and say, "You know, yes, all's well in great old Ontario."

Well, all is not well, and I must say to you that it disturbs me greatly to see the man who heads the government of our province stand in his place and make statements like: "There will be no cost as a result of the 30% tax cut. It will not cost us any revenue because it's going to create so many jobs, and people will be back to work and paying taxes, and we'll have more revenue come in. In fact, we'll get more revenue than we lost." The

Premier of the province made that statement, that there was no cost to this in tax revenue. Do you support that? Do you agree with that statement?

I suggest to you that when you went out and campaigned in 1995 and all carried around your Common Sense Revolution, you didn't agree with that statement, because the Common Sense Revolution very clearly shows revenue loss due to the tax cut and very clearly shows additional expenditure cuts that your government would have to make and now are in the process of announcing on a daily basis that are affecting people in communities right across this province. The Common Sense Revolution set it out.

If you give a 30% tax break, that means you lose revenue coming in to the government, over the course of the term of office of your government, to the tune of about \$27 billion.

"At the same time, in the Common Sense Revolution, you said: Well, we're going to have to cut more than we would cut just to balance the budget, just to deal with the deficit, in order to pay for that tax cut. Because it will take a couple of years for those cuts to come into effect and for us to get the result of that, that money in hand, we're going to have to borrow in the meantime. So it's going to take us longer to deal with the deficit. We're going to add to the cumulative debt. We're going to cut deeper and harder and harsher in communities, in people's lives, than we would need to otherwise because we're committed to proceeding with the 30% tax cut."

I have to wonder why. When you ask the government, when you try to penetrate the veil over there to get a clear answer, the only thing we get back is, "Well, this is how we're going to create 725,000 jobs." Please explain to me how. There isn't an economist, an expert, an individual with common sense in this province who believes that your tax cut is going to be a job creation program, and particularly not one of that magnitude.

What I wish the members would sit down and think about and discuss in their caucus and come to understand is that the nature of the cuts that you are currently making to public expenditures in this province to the tune of \$8 billion, the nature of those cuts, that amount of money, \$8 billion, that you are taking out of the economy, is putting us on the verge of sliding back into a recession.

For 10 years we've heard the wise wisdom of the neo-conservative economists and others who have said to us: "Look, it's an easy prescription. Just deal with your deficit. Keep your monetary policy the way it is. Interest rates will come down, and investment will flow in." I remember Mike Harris before the election, "Elect the Tories, and investment will flood in." Well, where is it? "Elect the Tories, and all will be well. Consumer confidence will return." Well, it hasn't. But do you ask yourselves why? Sometimes I think you just don't get it.

People who are sitting at home at this time worried about whether or not they're going to have a job tomorrow are not going to go out and purchase a new washing machine or a new car or even more minor expenditures. They're not going to spend money. People who have already lost their jobs can't afford to spend money.

I don't know how you expect that consumer confidence is going to come back when all of the steps that

you are taking are taking confidence out of our economy. The men and women who walked the OPSEU picket line for five weeks trying to fight for their jobs to keep a secure future for the delivery of services in this province, they're not out spending money, rebounding consumer confidence. The young teachers who are just coming into the system who have just got their first job and who know that thousands more layoff notices are going to come over the next few months, they're not out spending money.

The money that you're taking out of the economy—and don't forget that the public sector and public spending is part of the economy; it doesn't just affect those individuals you will be laying off or those individuals who are not receiving the same level of income support, like social assistance recipients; it affects the whole economy that they live and breathe and spend in. It affects the people who run the corner stores, the retail outlets, the car sales, housing sales, all of those areas. There is an effect. This is part of the economy.

The tax break that you propose which is going to not just offset that but is going to create the stimulus in this economy that will create your 725,000 jobs, over two thirds of the value of the lost revenue of that is going to families with the top 10% of incomes in this province. How do you expect that this money is going to come back in and recirculate in the economy? Where do you think the stimulus is going to come from? These people are not going to immediately go out and buy cars and washing machines. These are people who already have disposable income. These are people who will put it in investments, who will reduce indebtedness, who will take holidays. It's not going to stimulate the economy.

So you leave us in a very precarious situation. You cut, you affect the very lives of families, the fabric of neighbourhoods and communities. At the same time, you endanger our economy as a result of those cuts and all that it means in the spinoff in the economy, pushing us over the precipice back into a recession, all to pay for a tax break that will affect the wealthiest, that will not stimulate the economy, and at the same time you do nothing to deal with the deficit. I don't see how this is common sense. I don't see how you can continue to argue that this is the economic prescription for an ailing economy.

I urge you to think this through. While I don't expect that you will vote with us today on this non-confidence motion, I urge you to think this through. I urge you to talk some sense into your cabinet, to raise this issue at caucus, because we will all have to live with the end outcome, yourselves included. What you do to this province, you do to the kids of this province. Those are the people you say you want to make the changes for. The changes you're making are bad, the changes you're making are negative and they will hurt. I ask you to please reconsider, think this through. The tax break is not a commonsense solution at this point in time.

1610

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): The motion put forward by the member for Algoma in a very real way, I believe, points out both the philosophical and the practical economic differences between the government and the third party.

In fact, at the root of this motion you will find that the economic direction the member for Algoma wants this government to take is the same route that the previous government did. He wants us to follow the NDP's policies of failure. The member for Algoma is opposed to this government balancing the budget and implementing a 30% reduction in income taxes for the hard-working men and women taxpayers of the province.

If my memory serves me correctly, and I believe it does, a non-confidence vote on the NDP economic policies was held only 10 months ago. Yes, it's becoming clearer to me now. There was a non-confidence motion held by the people of the province. It was a non-confidence vote on the NDP economic policies. As painful as it may be for the member for Algoma to remember, let me remind him that the vote was held in the form of a provincial general election on June 8, 1995.

It was on June 8, 1995, that the vast majority of the people of this province emphatically stated that they did not have confidence in the economic policies of the NDP government. The people of this province threw the NDP out of power and relegated it to the status of a small-numbered third party. That is the most emphatic vote of non-confidence that the NDP could possibly experience.

On that same June 8, 1995, the people of Ontario in the majority of the ridings throughout the province gave a mandate to the members of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. The members of this caucus were given the mandate to form the government, to balance the budget and to reduce personal income taxes by 30%. The fact that it is the member for Algoma who is putting this motion forward is, in my mind, symbolic in that, as a cabinet minister of the former NDP government, the economic policies of which pushed this province to near financial disaster, he provides an excellent gauge to determine the degree of accurateness and effectiveness of our government's economic policies. Given the former minister's track record of supporting multibillion-dollar economic failures, I can state with conviction that the more the member for Algoma disagrees with our policies, the more correct we know they will prove to be.

In his motion, the member for Algoma would have this House believe that this government has refused to listen to expert economic witnesses who appeared before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. Yet the member for Algoma, as a cabinet minister in the former NDP government, had a track record of totally disregarding the expert views of virtually tens of thousands of employers throughout the province. When organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and various boards of trade, organizations which represent over 100,000 businesses in the province, the major employers of the province, expressed their views on the impact on their businesses of various NDP government economic policies, these organizations were totally ignored.

The economically incompetent former government believed that it knew more about how to stimulate the business environment and create jobs than did the very people who actually were creating the jobs in the province. It astounds me that the member for Algoma and the

NDP had the audacity to believe that they knew more about how to stimulate the economy of this province than the very people who actually run the businesses which drive the economy of Ontario. How ironic.

In the member's motion he states that he believes the fiscal plan of the government will not work to create jobs. As a barometer of economic disaster, his strong disapproval of our policies must be viewed as an emphatic endorsement that our policies not only will work but are working.

In February, Ontario led all provinces in job creation. The creation of 31,000 new jobs in February, the single largest job gain in any February in over a decade and the single largest gain in job creation in 16 months is an excellent vote of confidence in this government's plan to get Ontario back to work. In February we also saw an amazing 71% year-over-year jump in Toronto home sales. As well, the real GDP in Ontario rose 4.7% in the third calendar quarter with increased consumer spending. These factors indicate that this province is finally heading in the right direction.

I would like to point out that I was a member of the finance committee which had the opportunity to hear from many delegations, and contrary to what the member for Algoma would have this House believe, many delegations did in fact support the overall economic strategies of this government, including the 30% tax reduction.

John McCallum, chief economist of the Royal Bank, stated in a direct question about the tax cut from the member for Beaches-Woodbine: "We have to meet the deficit target—you and I agree on that—but I think if we have spending cuts that allow a tax cut while at the same time meeting the deficit targets, from an economic activity point of view let's have the tax cuts. We sure need extra economic activity, and those tax cuts would put more money into people's hands and that would help the economy."

Judith Andrew of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which represents over 60,000 small businesses in the province, stated in her presentation, "It stands to reason that leaving more of Ontarians' hard-earned pay in their own hands will permit increased spending on goods and services and all sorts of positive multiplier effects, one of which is jobs."

In a response to a question about our government's approach to tax reduction, Bob Malcolmson from the Brampton Board of Trade, which also agrees with our government's overall economic policies, stated, "As long as people, at the end of the day, have more money in their pocket to spend, it will work fine."

But perhaps the clearest articulated support for the necessity for the tax reductions was from Patti Croft, the managing director and chief economist for Canada Trust. Ms Croft stated, "Some have argued Ontario should reduce the depth of the spending cuts and forget about the tax cut in order to facilitate this deficit reduction process, but I must say, to me, that's like treating a terminal tumour with a Band-Aid instead of the fact that a scalpel is really required."

In addition to these delegations, many other delegations strongly support the economic direction of this government. The Ontario Home Builders' Association,

representing 3,500 companies in 35 localities across the province, stated that it was concerned about the deficit and strongly supported this government's fiscal management strategy and urged the government to fully implement that strategy as quickly as it can.

The Canadian Manufacturers' Association, representing over 75% of the total manufacturing output of the province, which translates into \$140 billion, supports the strategy of this government.

The Retail Council of Canada, which has close to 3,000 members, stated, "We would like to say that our members are delighted at the government's steps to correct the province's fiscal situation."

The Ontario Trucking Association, whose members employ approximately 200,000 people, 5% of the province's labour force, stated its members' support for the economic direction of this government, as did the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association, as did the Ontario Taxpayers Federation, as did many others.

There were many delegations who spoke in favour of this government's economic direction and the need for the 30% tax cuts to stimulate the economy and to move forward to creating the 725,000 jobs which is this government's job creation target.

In closing, I just want to state that the member for Algoma and the entire third party are incorrect in their economic analysis, again. The member for Algoma states that this government has refused to pay attention to the reality of Ontario's economic situation. How pathetic that sounds to me coming from a former cabinet minister who left this province a legacy of \$10-billion-a-year deficits. How pathetic it sounds to constantly have to listen to this member talk about how concerned the NDP is about the safety of the various social programs when it is members of the former government which ran up the provincial debt by over \$50 billion in five years, a debt which if left unchecked would have killed the very social programs about which the NDP expresses concerns. How pathetic it sounds to hear the members of the former NDP cabinet talk about their concern for health care and education when the interest on the debt is more than this government can spend on its hospitals, when the interest is more than this government can budget for primary and secondary education and is more than this government can spend on many other programs.

1620

The harsh economic realities this government faces are the direct result of incompetent handling of the provincial finances by the incompetence of the former NDP government. How pitiful to listen to the member for Algoma on the subject of Ontario's economic situation when it is his government which singlehandedly did more to destroy the economic foundation of this province than any government in its history.

I have a great deal of respect for people who are strong enough to admit their mistakes and take the necessary steps to do whatever is necessary to correct the impact of their errors. However, this is certainly not the case with the NDP, which has elevated emphatic posturing to a new art form.

I agree with the many delegations that came before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs in

our pre-budget consultations who stated their confidence in our economic strategy, and I strongly support our 30% tax reduction program. I also agree with the vast majority of voters who showed their non-confidence in the inept economic policies of the NDP and I will therefore be voting against the member's motion.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'd like to return the debate to what I would call maybe a commonsense sort of argument, if I could use that phrase, and get away from the political rhetoric and the ranting and the raving and the imputing of motives we've just heard. I ran a farm business before I was elected, I ran a municipality as its chief administrator and I also was the treasurer and the chair of a hospital board in New Liskeard, so I understand about money and I understand about finances. If you really think about what this government's doing and if you're thinking about running a government as a business, this tax cut just doesn't make good business sense.

My understanding of how business works is that as a shareholder I should look forward to receiving a dividend once our company makes a profit. But in the case of government, we all know we're not anywhere near that point. We're nowhere near balancing our books. I think that all of us here would like to see government start to balance the books and that we will all support that sort of activity, but while we're doing that, to start to borrow money, and of course to borrow money from Canadian pension funds and offshore funds and banks to fund this tax cut, just doesn't make sense. It really doesn't make common sense, and I just don't know why this government is hell-bent on this, quite frankly.

If you look at it as a political experiment, let's look at recent history and see where this has been attempted and how successful it was. The most common example we would use is what we used to call Reaganomics when Ronald Reagan was President of the United States for two terms in the 1980s. He was convinced by right-wing economists at the time that this brand-new trickle-down theory, in trying to stimulate the economy through a tax cut, would be the way to bring your debt under control and also to start to pay down your debt. We all know that through the two terms of the eight years he served as President of the United States, Mr Reagan ended up doubling its debt.

This whole notion theoretically, and realistically as we've seen when Reagan tried it, of trying to stimulate the economy by giving a tax cut in any progressive tax regime that benefits the well-off rather than the poor, but somehow it trickles down to the low wage earners, just doesn't work. I don't know why now, in the middle and beyond the middle of this decade, we are embarking upon a course of action that Ronald Reagan took in the early 1980s, in the last decade. It just doesn't make any sense, and I have to wonder why the government is embarking on this.

It's rare that politicians want to talk about not cutting taxes. But I think if you're responsible nowadays you have to realize that with a \$100-billion accumulated debt in this province, with deficits in foreseeable budgets in the next few years, and I'm sure in the budget that's going to be announced in the next three weeks we're

going to see a multibillion-dollar deficit that's going to add more to our accumulated debt, it would be irresponsible for anybody to proselytize that we should be having a tax cut. So while it may be unpopular, I think it is realistic to say, let's at least minimally freeze taxes. We have hit the tax wall, there's no doubt about it, but I think we have a responsibility.

There's no point in pointing blame. I know the governing party likes to point to the previous government and to our government, when we were there between 1985 and 1990, as part of the problem. We were all part of the problem. In fact the Bill Davis and John Robarts governments accumulated great deficits in this province also. So it's all our problem and we all are accountable for it and responsible for it. So Mea Culpa, we'll say yes, we were part of it too, but why don't we work together and find the best way to solve this problem?

I don't think the way to solve this problem is to make the severe cuts that we're hearing announced on a daily basis, starting in November when our hospitals got severely trashed, the Ontario drug benefit got severely cut, elementary and secondary schools got severely cut—and we're seeing the ramifications of that today—colleges and universities severely cut, municipalities, government administration. Everything the government's been doing has been slashed.

We've had a severe impact on our government services in Ontario this last little while. In fact, if somebody was away for the last 10 years and moved back to Ontario today, I think it would be very hard to recognize that this is the same Ontario we used to live in. We're no longer the compassionate Ontario of a Bill Davis government or a John Robarts government, which while it was Conservative was still very middle of the road. They understood that while business had to flourish—that was the prime job creator for our province and our economy—we still had to have a compassionate heart and make sure that we took care of those people less fortunate than ourselves. We've lost this compassionate heart in Ontario. That seems to be banished in Ontario government right now.

I'm glad to see that the Minister of Community and Social Services is here. I hope he's listening to some of the concerns that our members are bringing up in question period and some of the things I'm bringing up here today. While we all understand that the private sector is the engine of the economy here and that's where the job creation has to be and we no longer can look, especially in some of the regions where I come from, at government as the prime job creator—it's got to come from the private sector—we still have to do things with some reason, with some rationale. I'm afraid that many of the cuts that are occurring here today in Ontario and are about to occur in the next few weeks in the 1996 Ontario budget are being done without any thinking and they're not being well-thought-out.

The potential ramifications are absolutely horrendous. Today we had an incident in question period where our leader, Lyn McLeod, brought up to the minister, who is here today, the incident that happened in Simcoe where two families have put up their children for adoption because they are receiving welfare and they cannot

sustain those children on the 22% cut that hit them in the fall.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): That's not my Ontario.

Mr Ramsay: One of my colleagues behind me said that's not his Ontario. It's certainly not my Ontario. Growing up in Ontario as I did, under mostly Conservative governments, as a child, it's not the Ontario that was the Conservative Ontario of my childhood, of the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s. This is what I don't really understand. What's happened to this Conservative Party? It's not the same party that once ruled this province I would say almost as a small-l liberal regime. They understood the balance. At the same time as they maybe brought in price controls and wage controls, they brought in rent controls at the same time, to try to bring in some balance.

What's missing from this government is balance, a sense of balance. Not too many people in this House, I think, would dispute the goals of what this government is trying to attain. We do want to get government finances under control; there's no doubt about that. We do want to make sure we have a prosperous economy; we all want to accomplish that. But we've got to take our time and we've got to do this reasonably and we've got to do this compassionately.

I ask this government to reconsider that tax cut, and therefore, I'm supporting this resolution today.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm pleased to have a few minutes to add my views on this important resolution. Certainly, I will be voting in favour of it.

Not surprisingly, we've heard from the government side why they will not be supporting it. I have to say, as I said, not surprisingly, because while there is indeed a lot that can be said about what this government is doing, one thing that I think can be said very clearly is that there is very little common sense in what they're doing. What I see more and more is really just a reform-minded ideological agenda that's driving their actions, because if they had any inkling of common sense they would see that on the tax front alone they were the ones—remember Mike Harris talking a lot about there's only one taxpayer in the province.

If there's only one taxpayer in the province, one could ask why it is that this government finds it acceptable to increase taxes for the softwood lumber industry and slap on an export tax that's going to kill jobs in northern Ontario, in the sawmills throughout northern Ontario, and going to make that product more expensive as we ship it to the United States. One would ask, if they believe so much in the concept of one taxpayer and indeed in lowering taxes, why it is that they would then cut funding to school boards and municipalities, resulting in increases in property taxes, in user fees being increased, and tuition fees as a result of cuts to colleges and universities, and in user fees that seniors and others will have to pay for their medicines?

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They can argue all they want about the fact that they are reducing through the 30% tax cut, taxes across the board. Indeed they will be, if they go forward with that proposal. But the reality is that for the average taxpayer

out there, the people whom I represent in the riding of Dovercourt and people throughout this province, the average taxpayer in this province will see overall an increase in their taxes when you balance it all out. So you have to ask: What's the point of it? The point of it has got nothing to do with common sense, it's got nothing to do with lowering the deficit. It has everything to do with shifting the power and the wealth into the hands of the richest citizens in this province.

It is a very clear ideological bent. One would wish that at least they would have the decency to admit that and say: "We believe in this ideologically so fervently we don't care about what the impact is. This is what we're going to do because we think that this will get money into the hands of our friends." That's what's going to happen. That's the sheer reality of it.

We've heard a lot, perhaps not enough, about jobs today in the discussions leading to not just this resolution but many other issues in this House. Even on that front we can parade all of the quotes we want, but the sheer reality is that there has not been one economist to date who has said, "Do the 30% tax cut and that will create the 725,000 jobs." The other part of the reality is that what this government is counting on is that 30% tax cut as being the primary, if not the only, avenue to creating those 725,000 jobs. The truth is, it won't happen.

It won't happen, not because I'm standing here saying it won't happen, but it won't happen because economist after economist have said that it's not going to happen. Indeed, the Minister of Finance himself when he came before the finance committee admitted that any positive impact that will come out of the 30% tax cut—he doesn't expect it to be seen certainly for the first year after the tax cut and to a large extent not even in the second year after the tax cut.

One could ask, are all these jobs going to be created in the last year of the mandate of this government? I don't think so.

Again we have a ridiculous situation in which simply for an ideological reform-minded bent this government is going to proceed with this tax cut, but not because it makes any sense, common or otherwise, but simply because it's going to put more and more money and more and more power into the hands of the richest citizens in this province. It's as simple as that. Now, we can scream all we want or we can be as quiet as possible, but that's the sheer reality, because what the people of the province elected on June 8 and what we are seeing now are not exactly the same thing, because this is the same government that said they would protect spending for health care, they would protect spending for classroom education, they would protect spending for the justice system, and we have seen in each of those three areas those promises broken.

Isn't it interesting that the only promise Mike Harris seems bent on keeping is this 30% tax cut? Again, why? Well, look at who benefits from it. It's not the average person in my riding. It's not the average citizen across this province. It's the 10% of the richest citizens in this province.

That's why Mike Harris is doing this. That's the reality, and this will come back to roost on Mike Harris and the Conservative caucus.

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): I want to say it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to speak to the motion from the member for Algoma, the honourable leader of the third party. I have to say it really amazes me how the leader of the third party can sit over there, criticize this government for trying to remedy a problem that his party and the Liberal Party before him really created.

If increasing taxes were the secret to strengthening the economy, boosting consumer confidence and creating jobs, then we wouldn't be sitting here now in the kind of financial mess that we're in. The leader of the third party has absolutely no right to say that the House has lost confidence in this government. I would suggest to him that on June 8 the voters of this province made it very clear that they had actually lost confidence in the NDP. It was the NDP and the Liberals before them who raised taxes 65 times in the last 10 years, of which 11 of those were related to family income, to the point where in Ontario we now have one of the highest tax margins in all of North America.

I would like to point out to the new leader of the third party that Ontarians now, thanks to him and his cohorts, face a marginal tax rate of 53% on incomes over \$63,000. In real, inflation-adjusted terms, the take-home pay for the average Ontario worker today is less than it was 10 years ago. People today are working more hours, they're seeing their families less and, at the end of the day, they have less to take home for it.

I want to say that the past two governments have spent and spent and have had to borrow to do it. I look at my own riding, for example, Brantford, and I see a Mohawk Lake redevelopment project of \$6 million, a waterfront development project of \$2 million, an economic development fund of \$7 million, a brand-new shiny labour centre of \$3 million, all of which borrowed money in the last year to fund. I think that's a shame and I think the people of Brantford got tired of that old style of politics. That's why they chose a new government on June 8 of last year.

It's no wonder that the people of Ontario have lost confidence in the economy or in their ability to get another job should they lose the one they currently have, when 20 cents of every dollar is going to service the debt load of the past two irresponsible governments. We're obviously dealing with a \$10-billion deficit and a \$100-billion debt.

Taxes have been taking away an increasing share of our incomes, leaving people with less to spend and invest in their futures and families. I believe, and the people on this side of the House believe, that people deserve better than that. They have asked for better, they have voted for a better deal and that's exactly what we intend to give them.

Government spending is the least beneficial and cost-effective way to stimulate the economy, and I don't think there's any argument over that. I think that even the people across the floor realize the best way to stimulate the economy is to create consumer confidence and to increase the disposable income of the average hard-working Ontarian.

I want to quote from the motion that's on the floor, which clearly says that "economic growth in Ontario is

predicted to continue to be weak at 2.3%" and "the current unemployment rate for the province stands at 8.9% and the employment outlook given the low growth rate is expected to continue to weaken...." I ask the leader of the third party, does he not see the irony in these statements? You put more money back into the pockets of hardworking people of Ontario and they will spend it, pure and simple. That will create jobs and that will restore the consumer confidence and stimulate the economy of this province.

We have reached a point where it is no longer acceptable to the voters of Ontario to simply breathe a sigh of relief when their taxes don't go up. In fact, I believe, and our government believes, that it's time to give some of that back. Taxes distort economic behaviour by discouraging people from working harder, saving and investing.

I want to give you a few examples as well. In Britain, as an example, the highest marginal tax rate was reduced from 83% to 60% and then to 40%, with greater revenue afterwards. In New Zealand, in 1986, the marginal tax rate went from a high of 66% down to 48%, followed by a further decrease to 40.5% in 1988 and down to 33% in 1990. In Sweden, significant changes to the whole tax system saw reductions in income tax rates from 42% in 1989 to 35% in 1990.

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There's no question that other jurisdictions around the globe and in this country, and in the US as well, are recognizing very clearly that high taxes kill jobs, that high taxes really put a damper on economic growth and that the way to really create jobs again, to get the economy back on track, is to create more disposable income for hardworking people and to give them as well the kind of consumer confidence they need to stimulate the economy.

I want to allude very briefly to a comment that was made by the leader of the third party. He indicated, and correctly so, that the reductions in expenditures we're implementing now are certainly having a negative impact on the economy, but I want to point him to page 21 of the Common Sense Revolution, which clearly states that there will be an economic drag as a result of the policies we implement. Of course, we've calculated that into our economic model. I read the Liberal red book. I read it from cover to cover. I never saw anything in there.

Applause.

Mr Ron Johnson: They're clapping across the way and I certainly don't understand it because it made no sense. I never saw anything in there at all about economic drag. There was nothing in there. They were going to cut government spending, they were going to reduce thousands of public service employees, and yet not one mention in their model of the effects of that on the economy. We took that into consideration and it's a very real part of our growth figures. I want to suggest that the third party never even had a plan. I'm glad they didn't, because we saw what their first plan did to the province.

To look at a few of the economists—I know that Mr Silipo just talked about a couple who said there was no real benefit to tax cuts—I want to quote CMA chief economist Jayson Myers, who in the Toronto Star, on October 12 of last year, said: "This is where the real

weakness in the economy is. Incomes are falling, the tax bite is increasing, consumer and household debt is now more than 100% of personal incomes." In addition to lower interest rates, the cut in personal income taxes promised by the Mike Harris government should also help. That's not us; we're not saying that; that's CMA chief economist Jayson Myers.

U of T economics professor Jack Carr said: "Businesses are going to go where taxes are lower over the long term. That is what the Harris government is trying to do. It will help." Again, that's not us saying that; that's Professor Jack Carr at the U of T.

Oddly enough, I have one here whom I know the member for Algoma will be interested in. This is Kevin Hayes, senior economist for the Canadian Labour Congress. I'm not sure whether or not the member across knows Mr Kevin Hayes, but in the Globe and Mail, October 18, he said declining purchasing power is undermining the ability of consumers to help spend the economy out of its lethargy. "There's this theory floating around that you can somehow have an economic recovery without improving the incomes of workers. But it's impossible." That's Kevin Hayes, senior economist for the Canadian Labour Congress.

The time has clearly come to say that enough is enough and start rewarding people for their hard work. Let me ask the leader of the third party what the point is in somebody working very hard, working 40, 50, 60 hours a week, only to have a government take away a larger portion of those earnings than it did 10 years ago. Where is the justice in that? Where is the incentive to work hard and invest in Ontario's economy when the harder a person works, the more the government takes away?

I want to allude just briefly to an article that appeared in the Brantford Expositor, which is our local daily newspaper in Brantford. The headline says, "Business Has High Expectations for 30% Tax Cut." One of the many quoted in the article is Ted Mallett from the CFIB. He talks briefly about how "a March survey conducted by the federation and released last week showed more than 80% of its members thought the tax cut would help business prospects." I'm not sure if the member across is aware, but if you're helping business prospects, what you're doing is creating jobs and small business in this province, and that's what this government is committed to doing.

He went on to say: "They believe it would be quite positive in their businesses and hence for the economy, and they certainly expect the government to move forward. The effect of that extra money in the economy snowballs into job creation some time in the future." That really speaks volumes on the legitimacy of our tax cut and it talks very clearly on how important it is for us to make sure that we fulfil that promise to the voters of this province.

We believe that a balanced approach—cutting taxes, balancing the budget—will improve Ontario's competitive position, which will enhance our attractiveness as a place to invest and do business, and provide a direct boost to job creation.

The leader of the third party has absolutely no right at all to suggest that this government has not got the confidence of the people of Ontario. In fact, I look at the problems we're trying to solve and I look at what his party did in the last five years—a government which condemned more families and more women and more children to welfare than any government in the history of this province, and he's sitting over there lecturing us on how to be fiscally responsible. I think what we have is a plan that will provide hope and opportunity to the hardworking people of Ontario.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise in support of the resolution in front of us today from the third party. I'm listening with a great deal of interest to the self-righteous taxfighters that we now have found across the floor. I want to remind my friends across the floor that they keep talking about the 10 years and so on. They conveniently forget there was another government in power before that.

Let me just remind you again, in case you haven't seen those stats yet, that before your Premier became Taxfighter Mike, when he was a member of the government between 1981 and 1984, a recessionary period, Mike Harris supported 16 tax increases, for a total of \$1.8 billion across Ontario. We conveniently forget that in those three years when your Premier was a member of that government, he supported tax increases in personal income tax, OHIP premiums, fuel tax, tobacco tax, beverage tax and on and on.

Very clearly, this government today chooses to forget a time period when it governed this province and chooses to forget a time period when it imposed tax increases. I guess that was then and this is now, and it's convenient to talk as the great taxfighters once you've been out of office for 10 years.

If we look at where this is leading, very clearly this government is taking a tremendous risk with the lives and the future of this province. What you are trying to do is something that has never been done. I challenge members across the floor to find a government anywhere in North America, or really in the western world, that has managed to succeed in eliminating a deficit, eliminating a debt and at the same time offer a 30% tax cut and still maintain the basic, essential services. Certainly I have not found such a success story anywhere in Canada, the United States or anywhere else in the last 10 to 20 years in a democratic system that we're aware of.

When you look at the impacts of these cuts—and the impacts are felt—the reason the cuts are driven to the level they are at is not only to balance the budget; it's not only to start working towards the deficit.

It is to feed this 30% tax cut. One could understand the need to work towards balancing the budget in this province. That is a goal I think we all share. That is a goal we would have attempted had we been in government; that's something the NDP talk about, had they come back to government. No one is questioning that. No one is questioning the need to attack the cumulative debt in this province. But one must question the sanity of trying, at the same time, to offer a tax cut that clearly is going to benefit the rich.

Let me give you an example. In my own community of Hamilton, the average \$30,000 earner will receive \$702 as a result of your tax cut. The average bank chairperson will receive \$110,000. There appears to be a bit of a disparity there; there appears to be a bit of an imbalance. No one can argue with the fact that this tax cut you're offering is simply a payoff to your wealthy friends. It is nothing more than that.

Let's continue to look at my own community; let's look at the other side of it. Now we're going to benefit by \$700. You earn \$30,000 in Hamilton, you're going to benefit by \$700. Let's look at the layoffs. In the 12 transfer partners, there are anticipated layoffs of 4,000 to 5,000 people in Hamilton-Wentworth as a direct result of your cut in transfer payments. Some 4,000 to 5,000 Hamiltonians who are working today will not be working six months or a year from now in the transfer agencies as a result of your cuts. Maybe you can point out to those individuals how they're going to benefit from this 30% tax cut. You have cut \$106 million in transfer payments to those 12 partners in Hamilton-Wentworth.

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There's still another price. There's the other side of it. How are these bodies, these agencies going to cope? They're going to introduce user fees. This is a great shell game this government plays. They somehow pretend that they're going to give you this money back. As Mike Harris says, the taxpayer is a taxpayer is a taxpayer. They fail to realize it's the same people who may get the \$700 tax cut, if they work and if they can hang on to their job after you have gutted every system and every transfer agency and partner that we have, and if they get this tax cut they now have to pay user fees on the other side.

In my own community, the city of Hamilton increased its user fee revenue by \$1 million this year; the region of Hamilton-Wentworth, \$1 million; \$5.1 million in water and sewer fee increases; a \$6-million increase in user fees to McMaster University; \$2.9 million to Mohawk College; Hamilton Street Railway disabled transit system—all increases. That is a direct result of your transfer cuts.

Who do you think you're fooling with this tax cut that you think you're going to give to people? The reality is that the guy making \$30,000 a year is going to pay more than that on the other side. If he has a son or daughter going to McMaster University, that \$700 is just about gone simply in the tuition fee increase; forget every other user fee you've imposed upon and where you have forced municipalities to impose upon those individuals.

Very clearly, the person making \$100,000, \$200,000, \$300,000 a year is going to benefit tremendously because there is no way he's going to be impacted to the same degree by the increase in user fees, by an increase in tuition fees, by water fees. They probably don't need to use the bus system, so that's not really going to matter to them.

It's the guy who's working, the guy trying to make a living who is going to pay much more than the \$700 you're going to give him back as a result of the other side of the coin that you're doing here.

When you look at the cuts that have been made, literally every promise this government has made had to be broken. You promised no cuts in health care—

thousands of layoffs, hospital closures right across this province as a result of your tax cuts, as a result of your willingness to give your rich friends this tax cut. We have had massive cuts in education. We're going to see cuts in policing which you promised weren't going to happen, but municipalities have no choice because you have cut their funding.

We have seen the greatest assault on the poor, the needy, the disabled and children in the history of this province. I'm pleased the Minister of Community and Social Services is here to see this and hear this. What this government has done is unprecedented in this province. There has not been a government in the history of this province, including all previous Conservative governments, that has gone out of its way to attack the needy as you have, and you have spared no one.

There's been no sparing of the attack. You have attacked disabled individuals. You've promised they were not going to be cut; you have cut their benefits. There are thousands of disabled individuals today who are still on welfare and haven't been moved with a cut.

You have attacked children. You have attacked 400,000 children who depend on welfare across this province. Somehow you like to sit there and pretend that the 21.6% cut is not going to affect children. What you have done is doomed 400,000 kids to deeper misery and deeper poverty across Ontario.

You then cut the children's aid societies that are supposed to help families in need. You then cut women's shelters and services that are supposed to help abused women. On the one hand you've made all these changes that put more pressure on the family, more pressure on children, more pressure on women, and then you've taken away from them any sort of support mechanism that was there.

This is a cruel, mean-spirited government that likes to attack the easiest and most vulnerable targets in this province, and you know what? Kids are an easy target because they can't fight back yet. Disabled people are an easy target because they can't fight back sometimes. Single moms are an easy target because you have stereotyped and labelled them all as lazy bums who don't want to do anything. You continue to abuse and pick on these people.

That is the mentality that is driving this government and that is the legacy you're leaving for Ontario. You have polarized this province in a manner that it's never been polarized. You have set people against the neediest and you have set a mean-spirited climate that has never occurred in the history of Ontario. That is because you're obsessed with delivering this tax cut to your wealthy friends, and your attitude is, "If you can't make it on your own, then the hell with you; we're not going to help you."

That is not what has made Ontario what it is today. That is not what has made us one of the greatest provinces in the world, and Canada is certainly one of the best places in the world to live. It has not been the mean-spirited, cut-throat, slash-and-burn approach that this government feels they need to impose on the most needy and the most vulnerable people in our society.

I hope you sleep well at night. I really hope the champions of the Common Sense Revolution sleep well at night knowing what you've done to 400,000 kids. We raised it in the House today, and we predicted it was going to happen, that families were going to give up kids because they couldn't take care of them as a result of your cuts, and we saw that happen today. We said that was going to happen six or seven months ago. You were laughing at us at that point. We now have that reality.

Can anybody sit across the floor and defend a 30% tax cut to the wealthy at a time when families are going to children's aid societies saying: "I'm sorry. I cannot afford it. I don't have the money, the ability to properly care for my child any more"? At the same time, this government thinks that in that climate we can give a 30% tax cut.

I ask the members on the government side of the House, and I know that a lot of backbenchers, a lot of non-ministers—because the ministers have all been brainwashed and they know if they don't toe the line they're going to be kicked out of cabinet and that's the end of their limo and their big salaries and all that stuff. But I ask the backbenchers, the government members, to try to represent their constituents. I ask you to show that intestinal fortitude, to show what is required of the leadership of members who are elected, and speak out on behalf of your constituents, speak out on behalf of the disabled in your community, the hungry children, the single moms, the people you're beating up.

Have the guts to stand up to your cabinet ministers with their limos and their chauffeurs and their 22 staff people each. Have the guts to represent the people who sent you there and ensure that we abandon this crazy, outrageous idea of the 30% tax cut, because there's a price to be paid, and I don't think it's a price that Ontario is willing to pay. We're not New Jersey yet; we're not Mississippi yet.

You keep this up and you keep doing what you're doing to the needy in this province, you're going to polarize and you're going to have a revolution, and it's not going to be the revolution you're looking for. It's going to be a revolution that's going to blindside you, and you're going to wonder what the hell hit you when people start fighting back.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I just want to take a couple of minutes this afternoon to, first of all, compliment my colleagues on this side of the floor for some of the comments they've made and some of the ways they've explained the intricacies of the program that this government is imposing on this jurisdiction and the effect it's going to have overall as it unfolds and the economy begins to experience full blast the impact of the tax cut, the cuts to services delivered by government, and the jobs that represents by way of loss.

I just want to for a couple of minutes, if I can, put some wheels on the discussion that we're having here, maybe make it a little bit more real for people and talk about the impact it will have on my community, and just for a second show you some contrast so that people out there and across the floor hopefully will understand that the motion that's on the floor this afternoon is a motion that should be supported if anybody has any concern at all or care for the wellbeing of this province and the

people who choose to live and work and bring up children in Ontario today.

In Sault Ste Marie in 1990, when we got elected as a government, there was a community on the ropes. Algoma Steel was struggling through some very difficult times. They were into some labour relations difficulties. There was a strike, a lockout on.

I remember sitting down with the president of St Marys Paper, a fellow by the name of Dan Alexander, a very hardworking, sincere, dedicated individual who knew a lot about making paper and selling paper. He was bleeding to death because of the policies of the then Mulroney government—the high interest rate, the rate of the dollar—and he just couldn't seem to get ahead of the game. He was in difficulty and was sharing that with me six months to nine months into my first term in office.

The ACR, the Algoma Central Railway: The previous Liberal government had done a deal to put some money into that operation to keep it going. We, for the first couple of years of our time in office, were pumping in to the tune of about \$10 million a year just to keep it going, to keep it operating. It was struggling, and when it's struggling, the people it supplies and works for struggle. The community that it serves struggles as well.

I remember sitting down with the folks who owned Lajambe lumber and talking about some of the difficulties they were facing at the time. In other words, we had a community that was on the ropes, that was having a difficult time. What did we do? Did we turn our backs on it? Did we say: "You're on your own. Make it or break it. It's a cruel world out there. The marketplace decides"? No. We brought all of those people who had some concern and interest and some fear about the future together around the table, the people who owned the company, the people who managed the company, the people who worked at the company, the communities themselves, the banks and the government, and we worked out solutions such that today, and actually when your government took over, we had a community that was in major recovery.

1700

I remember Christmas of 1994 in Sault Ste Marie because of the good times that Algoma Steel was beginning to experience, the work that was there, the people that were working and collecting a paycheque. St Marys Paper was back on track again; the ACR, if you'll excuse the pun, was also back on track. People were confident they had a job that was going to last. The government of the day had resolved some of its difficulties by way of the social contract and the expenditure control plan. We weren't laying people off. We were telling them they had a job. They would have to work a little differently and perhaps for a little less money, but everybody was feeling confident.

There was a sense of stability in Sault Ste Marie in 1994, and people spent money. I remember walking around the malls in January 1995 and talking to small retail shop owners and talking to people, and everybody was happy. There was a mood in the air that was very positive and exciting, and people were actually looking forward to the future.

That's what this government inherited, and in the short six to nine months you've been in power, you have completely dampened that spirit.

You've taken away, by way of the things that you're doing, first of all, to the people on social assistance in our community, the poor who were doing okay under our government, who were taking the money they were getting because they couldn't find work—we even still couldn't develop an economy that was going to provide everybody with work, but we were working on it. We weren't taking jobs away from people. Soon after you reduced the amount of money that the poor were getting and spending in our community, you began to take away jobs and services.

Where you inherited a community that was in recovery, you have now taken that community and put it into a very serious recession. We're not sure what we're going to do. We're gathering together, we're looking at the numbers and we're trying to come up with some plan that in the long term and the short term will serve us and serve the people who live in our community, but we're not sure if we're going to be able to do that.

We know what you've done. We're living in tremendously difficult expectation of what you're going to come down with in May by way of the budget you're going to present, and we're not sure what's going to happen after that.

All we know is that it doesn't look good, it doesn't feel good, and this community, my community, the community I live in and work in and feel very, very strongly about and was excited about in January 1995, I'm now very concerned about. So I'm going to be supporting this resolution this afternoon and encouraging others in this House to do so as well.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I am pleased to be able to speak here today in opposition to the motion on behalf of my constituents in Durham Centre, that is, the people of Whitby and north Oshawa. It is sometimes forgotten that Whitby lies at the centre of Ontario's main street, that is, Highway 401, which, as you know, stretches from the Michigan border to the Quebec border. The important point to remember is that the midpoint of Highway 401 is exit 410. That is at the main exit to the historic and vibrant town of Whitby. That is at the centre of Main Street, Ontario.

May I speak of the concerns of my constituents about high taxes. I've heard from many of them in response to the survey I had in my householder about taxes. They want tax cuts. My constituents have expressed their concerns to me about the role of government in their lives. They agree, as I do and as most reasonable people do in Ontario, that government has a vital role to play with respect to certain core services such as health and education.

But my constituents know, and they know because they have lived through it, that government at all levels has expanded its scope and volume dramatically over the past 25 years or so. They know that they are not getting good value for their tax dollars. Most Canadians and people in Ontario, I think we could all agree, do not object to paying taxes if they feel they are getting value for their tax dollars. My constituents do not feel that they are

getting or have been getting value for their tax dollars, particularly in the last 10 years.

They know, because they have had to live through it, that this unrestrained and unfocused appetite for growth by government has a substantial price and they know who has to pay the price. It's the people of Main Street, Ontario, who have to pay the price for these decisions by politicians to continuously increase income taxes and other types of taxes. That price is ever-increasing taxation, including taxation on all the people of Durham Centre, which, as I may have mentioned, is at the centre of Main Street, Ontario.

May I speak also of the unacceptable level of taxation of Ontario families. Not only has government increased tax rates over time but government has not increased the categories of marginal taxation, so that more people are paying higher taxes at higher marginal rates than at any time in the history of our country, and that's because of the failure of governments to move those rates up as they move marginal rates up.

If we look at the facts rather than speculation or conjecture, we see that in Ontario the average two-income Ontario family has an income of perhaps \$57,000 or so. That family with that income is paying, it is estimated, about 47% of their income in taxes. My friend from Hamilton East talks about mean-spirited and then says, ignoring the fact that with the tax cuts, 60% of the people who will benefit from the tax cuts have an income of less than \$50,000. That's Main Street, Ontario. The income tax rate on taxable income above \$51,000 presently is about 45%.

People know, when they do their bank balancing and they look at their paycheques at the kitchen table, that in the past 10 years, in inflation-adjusted terms, their real incomes have declined despite pay increases, and one of the major culprits of that is government's insatiable appetite for income tax increases. Here in Ontario, we had 11 increases under the governments of the opposition parties opposite here over the last 10 years.

People know this. They know this when they sit in their homes and look at their paycheques and they see that they get a raise, so that theoretically they're supposed to make more money, and in fact they only make a couple more dollars because those governments kept increasing income taxes.

These levels of taxation imposed by government on the hardworking middle-class families of Ontario are unacceptable. They're also unacceptable to the small businesses of Ontario. Witness the Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey of its members, which all members have seen, indicating overwhelming support for the tax cuts proposed by our government. These levels of taxation are unacceptable to my constituents and they've made that clear to me in the survey results that I have, and these are the constituents, I remind you, of Main Street, Ontario. The families of Ontario want a tax break, and quite frankly, they've earned it.

What are the gains to be made from reducing income tax rates? Cutting taxes and balancing the budget over five years will improve Ontario's competitive position. High taxes mean less growth. The high level of taxation we all face in Ontario discourages job creation and

economic growth. My riding includes part of Oshawa. A high tax on cars means fewer car sales. That's why this government is committed to cutting taxes, including personal income taxes.

By income tax reductions, Ontario will become a more attractive place to invest and expand, which means the creation of real jobs, of lasting jobs. Government taking less money from Ontario families will stimulate family spending and investment, which will be a direct boost again to permanent, lasting job creation.

1710

Taxes also distort economic behaviour by discouraging people from working harder, from working overtime, from saving, from investing, all values that we used to care about and many Main Street people in Ontario still care about. High tax rates encourage people also to participate in the underground economy. That's why over 50 countries over the past decade have begun to cut their marginal tax rates; for example, Britain, New Zealand, Sweden. My friends opposite in the NDP would be familiar with their favourite foreign country of Sweden; significant changes to the whole tax system there, including reductions to income taxes from 42% in 1989 to 35% in 1990.

We have to leave more money in the hands of the people of Ontario so they can spend and invest in their communities. Getting consumers back into the marketplace and letting entrepreneurs reinvest profits back in their businesses are essential to increase growth and prosperity in Ontario.

There is no guarantee that governments do a better job of stimulating the economy than what consumers can do themselves. Benefits of tax cuts go to those who need them most. The real winners are the hard-pressed middle class who have borne the brunt of the tax increases of the last decade imposed by those parties opposite.

We believe that a balanced approach, cutting taxes and balancing the budget, will improve Ontario's competitive position which will enhance our attractiveness as a place to invest and do business and provide a direct boost to job creation.

Cutting taxes and balancing the budget will improve Ontario's competitive position and benefit all Ontario families. Cutting taxes and balancing the budget will provide some relief to the hard-working and heavily taxed parents of the many families in my riding of Durham Centre, which I remind the parties opposite lies at the centre of Main Street, Ontario.

Mr Crozier: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion of want of confidence, and I'm speaking in favour of it. I think it should be one that we do want confidence in the government, but I think it's more one of credibility. It's been referred to today about the number of tax increases that the Premier himself supported while he was a member of cabinet during the 1980s, so I can't understand how he puts himself forward as the great tax fighter.

But I do want to point out a couple of things: Rather than the rhetoric, I'm going to use statistics and if you want the source of the statistics, I'll tell you. Let me warn you that many of them are your own. But according to StatsCan, the CAW, the Conference Board of Canada

and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corp, the Canadian average weekly earnings are \$571 a week. That amounts to about \$29,000, almost \$30,000 a year. But let me tell you how this tax break that they're going to give the rich breaks down. If the average earnings are under \$30,000, that means then that anyone earning up to \$35,000, which is 42% of the Ontario population, will only get 7% of the tax cut. Those earning between \$35,000 and \$75,000 will just about break even; 42% will get the tax cut, it will represent around 40% of the population.

But here's the one that hurts and here's the one where the government says, "We have to share." Eighteen per cent of the population will get 51% of the tax break. Now, I don't really think that's fair. I don't think it's fair, I don't think it's equitable. You might be better served to reduce the provincial sales tax rate by half. That will give you the same reduction in total, but it will spread it over a larger number of people.

The average tax cut for the Ontario family will be about \$1,100. More than half, as I said, of the tax cut will go to those who have incomes over \$90,000. The average cut for those who are over \$90,000—and I'm sure the member who spoke previously is among this group because he said he was taxed at a higher rate—they'll get about \$4,400. That's \$4,400 for those who are over \$90,000. How many average Ontarians make \$90,000?

I also want to remind you and those who may be viewing today—I'm sure the members opposite know this; they just won't admit it—the speaker previously said they were going to balance the budget while reducing taxes. Well, by their own figures, the November 29, 1995, fiscal statement and the Common Sense Revolution figures for the out years, in the year 1998-99, when we could start to look towards an election, amazingly enough, the deficit will be \$4.7 billion. During this government's term in office, according to your own figures, you're going to have deficits totalling \$28.8 billion. You're going to pay \$5 billion of interest on that debt, and you're going to do that because of what coincidentally seems to work out to be an annualized tax cut of \$5 billion.

My friend from Essex-Kent has reminded me that the Tories, from the years 1969 to 1984, had 15 straight deficits. That's more deficits than the Montreal Canadiens had wins in a string of Stanley Cups, so you're ahead of the Montreal Canadiens in that respect.

In 1969, the year of their first deficit, and through the string of 15 deficits that the Tory predecessors had, they ran up a total debt in the neighbourhood of \$30 billion to \$35 billion. During the term of office of the Liberals, admittedly we added \$5 billion to that. Now, of course, our debt stands at around \$100 billion, and these guys, the cost controllers, are going to raise the current debt to \$116.8 billion, and you know what? They're going to borrow every nickel of it.

It was said earlier that if you have a share in a company, you rarely give a dividend until you have your spending in order, but let me conclude by giving you some more statistics. These are from the PC party from

1981 to 1985, they are the Liberal Party's figures from 1985 to 1990, and the NDP indicators from 1991 to 1995.

The unemployment rate by the PC government during their period was 8.7%; the Liberals, during their term in office, had an unemployment rate of 5.9%; and the NDP's, through an economic downturn, was 10.3%.

During those same blocks of time, the number of jobs created: by the Tories, 64,800 on average; the Liberals, 112,000 a year on average, and the NDP, again because of an economic downturn, had a net reduction.

Tax increases per budget—we talk about the great tax fighters. The average tax increase per budget for the Tories was 6; the average for the Liberals, 5.3; and the average for the NDP, 7.3.

Tax decreases per budget—because we want to look at a net figure—was 2 for the Tories, 4.3 for the Liberals, and 3 for the NDP.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): Give us the dollars.

Mr Crozier: Well, if you took that deficit of \$35 billion in 1984 in today's dollars and compared to today's expenses, I suggest to you that it would be just as bad as anybody else's, so don't colour yourself any different.
1720

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to wrap up the comments on behalf of our caucus. What this debate boils down to, in my opinion, in the long run is how one views government and the role that government plays in the lives of citizens and in society as a whole. We have now in Ontario a government that believes that anything to do with government and anything to do with the public sector is evil and therefore it needs to be gone after, and that if you shrink government and you remove government more and more, then regardless of the circumstances, this is a good thing.

The fact of the matter is that we in the NDP do not believe that is the reality of government's role, certainly not for the average citizen, certainly not for the average working person and their family when they take a look at what you're doing to the education system, to the health care system, the social services system, our transportation networks—every facet of Ontario society this government is going after.

Quite frankly, if you're very well-off, if you're quite comfortable in our society, if you're one of those fortunate enough to already have the lion's share, you don't need to worry about the things I've just mentioned, because you've got the ability to buy those things for you and your family and your loved ones and the people you care about. But for the average working person, good government public services—and that means police, fire, ambulance, snowplows, recreation centres, libraries—these are all the things that add to the quality of life. If they weren't there, provided by the collective of society through the instrument of government, then in the vast majority of cases, for most working people, they wouldn't exist.

That's the fundamental difference between this Mike Harris reform party and the way we governed, because we believed that you had to invest in our society in order to reap the benefits for the majority. This government wants to invest in a tax cut because that's how their small

minority of friends can reap their greatest benefit, and that simply is to get back and keep as much money as they can. We've heard that time and time again.

This tax cut does not serve the average working person and their families at all; it serves the wealthy, who are already doing quite well, thank you very much. At the end of the day, the people of Ontario will turn their backs on that kind of agenda and what it does to Ontario.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I stand here today for obvious reasons, and that is, to speak against this motion. The opposition accuses us of speaking in ideology, but I suggest that this government has been run by nothing but ideology for the past five years.

With respect to the honourable member for Sault Ste Marie, I'm happy to hear his sincerity, because he is a person who speaks from the heart, but I had difficulty making a slight bridge when he said that in January 1995 there was a happy feeling of confidence in jobs, and after this government was elected, the poor were afflicted and suddenly that changed the situation with jobs. I apologize to the member, because I had difficulty understanding what his point was.

To get to the point at hand, the past decade has seen incomes decline consistently by the past two governments. And yes, there was some decline, I think, even beyond that, as one of the other members indicated earlier, but the reality is that they increased spending on a constant basis and they needed to fuel that spending with increased taxes.

That was a mindset. You increase spending and: "Oh, where are we going to get the money? Well, we'll just increase taxes one more time." And they did—65 times, 11 of them personal income tax hikes. That's more than one a year for a 10-year period.

On June 8 last year, the people wanted a tax cut because today, more than ever, it's important. The people of Ontario wanted a tax cut. They voted for a tax cut. We will deliver a tax cut. The people of Ontario put their trust in our party to do an important job: to restore the confidence in this province as a place to live, a place to work, a place to grow and a place to do business. In order to restore prosperity and confidence, we must get Ontario back on track, and it's already begun, because we know that this economy has created 31,000 net jobs—that's the biggest gain in 16 months—in the month of February; 76,000 since we took office six months ago.

They focus on the jobs that have been lost. You're never going to have a period where jobs aren't lost, but the point is that these are net gains—net gains. That is the important factor you have to look at. This is a society in transition. This is an industrial economy that is in transition.

Personal income taxes, as I said earlier, were raised 11 times over the past 10 years. The resolution implies that our government should forgo the tax cut and concentrate on the creation of jobs so the economy can grow and the deficit and the debt will be eliminated. Growing the economy does not mean government spending is the means by which to achieve job creation, because if government spending created jobs, we'd all have three jobs and there wouldn't be a 9% unemployment rate in

this province. No government has spent its way out of a recession and paid its way back.

We talk about Keynesian theory. Keynesian theory said that you spend money to pull your economy out of a recession, but all of the governments neglected the second part of Keynesian theory. The second part of Keynesian theory said that once you're out of the recession, you pay back the deficit, and that's never happened in recent years in our government. Now we are beginning to ensure that it does happen.

The member for Timiskaming said that we heard about comparisons between our government and those from the United States and, more specifically, supply-side economics. For years, liberal and socialist parties alike have misrepresented this era as an example of the failure of conservatism. Many times we heard the left wing and liberal mantra—what is it, sir, the member from Hamilton? It is, "The rich are getting richer; the poor are getting poorer."

Here are some of the facts that the opposition conveniently forgets. According to statistics obtained from the US government budget offices, from 1982 to 1989 the following occurred: There were 19 million net new jobs created, two thirds of which were middle- to higher-paying, resulting in the lowest unemployment rate in 16 years. The economic growth from the tax cuts increased federal revenue by \$1.1 trillion. That's right, the reductions in the marginal tax rates actually caused an increase in total revenue.

I draw your attention to this statistic: The tax cuts produced a 76% jump in new business investment and tripled the rate of productivity growth in the United States. Furthermore, real family income increased every year from 1983 to 1990 in every income group, from the poorest fifth of households to the richest fifth, and the poorest fifth increased by 12%.

The reason the debt was not addressed was because the Reagan government introduced spending cuts which were defeated and vetoed by the Democratically controlled Congress, and when that happened, the resulting revenue was negated. The fundamental difference between that government and this one—pay attention, sir—is that first we institute the spending cuts; then we introduce the tax reduction. That's what works.

1730

With respect to the honourable member who claimed that only the wealthy at \$90,000 to \$100,000 would be the biggest beneficiaries in this province, the reality is this: that only 1.4% of the population of Ontario earns over \$100,000, and that money is being clawed back by a health care levy. Read the entire policy in the Common Sense Revolution.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Another tax. Tax, tax, tax.

Mr Spina: It is not a tax. The health care levy is an existing tax that is already being paid that is being diverted and earmarked towards health care to replace the loss of revenue from the employer health tax that has been changed, that has been gotten rid of. You have to look at the three elements. It's a three-part triangle, my friends.

I just wanted to indicate one final element here, that whenever taxes of any nature increase, so does tax avoidance. People spend their money in the black market or the underground economy; hence, lost revenue to the province and the business community, and that situation is what economists refer to as diminishing returns. That statement, gentlemen and ladies, comes from the C.D. Howe Institute at the presentation made at the finance committee, to which the opposition had representative members.

What our government is trying to do is capture lost revenues by lowering taxes and giving people an incentive to work. We want to reward hardworking people by putting the money they earn into their pockets to spend as they see fit, not as the government sees fit.

The irony of this entire exercise is that the BC Premier feels that promising tax cuts is not a cynical attempt to grab votes in the upcoming election, but rather a genuine effort to react to the taxpayers' fears of a sliding standard of living, a sliding standard of living that we have experienced for the past few years in Ontario. I'm glad that BC's NDP Premier is using some common sense.

I vote against this motion because it's important that this government is here to serve the people of the province of Ontario.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm very proud to be able to stand and speak in support of the motion today, and in fact if we've listened to what the government members have said and compare it to what the official opposition and the third party have said, the member for Nickel Belt will know the gentleman I refer to as regional councillor Frank Mazzuca. He would say that there's been a whole lot of gobbledegook here this afternoon. What I'd like to do is try to bring it back to reality, and you know that when I speak I always like to make reference to the people that I represent, the Sudburians.

If I have any advice to offer the other members on the government side, it's that they should be listening and they should be speaking for the people that they represent—not for the party in power and not for the cause, but for the people they represent. So let me just try to make my arguments be reflective of what Sudbury's all about with regard to this 30% tax cut.

Indeed, it makes no sense to the people of Sudbury, because the rationale for this tax cut is flawed. If we can quote the finance minister in response to a question with regard to the rationale for the tax cut, he said, "We are not taking away jobs from Ontarians to finance a tax cut." Let's relate this to Sudbury for a second, because if we look at the article that appeared in Northern Life, we see:

"Hundreds of Hospital Sector Jobs Trimmed....

"Hundreds of jobs in the hospital sector are on the chopping block....

"Memorial Hospital's assistant executive director of personnel, Lloyd Harris, says his hospital could lose as many as 70 jobs....

"Still, Memorial, which employs 700 full- and part-time workers, will have to take other measures to control costs, such as permanently closing the hospital's second floor....

"The second-floor closure will affect 20 full-time equivalent staff, including nurses and registered practical nurses.

"Sudbury General Hospital will lose 4% of its funding or about \$1.8 million.

"Hospital spokesperson Deborah Dunn....estimates as many as 70 jobs at her hospital could be affected....

"Janice Skot, chief executive officer for Laurentian Hospital, said...layoffs cannot be ruled out in the future."

That's hospitals. Let's go to education in Sudbury. In a Friday, April 6, article which appeared in the Sudbury Star:

"The first 1996 budget draft calls for the reduction of 31 teachers from the payroll and 20 non-teaching employees. The board reports that those numbers will have to increase."

Catholic high schools in Sudbury: Initial projection will be for 43 less teachers next year.

Again, what we see in Sudbury is mirrored across Ontario. If we look at the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel, its statistics indicate that 5,735 jobs will be lost in the health care sector in Ontario over the course of the next three years. If we look at education across Ontario and just take four examples of boards, within a period of 10 days nearly 4,000 staff at four school boards throughout the province received layoff notices. Those facing unemployment include 1,573 employees at the Halton Board of Education, 950 employees at the Simcoe board of education, 918 from Hamilton, 519 from the Peel Board of Education. Further cuts are promised.

If you look at the fact that Mr Eves, the finance minister, says, "We're not taking away jobs from Ontarians to finance a tax cut," pure statistics say he's wrong. As a further part of a response to the rationale for the 30% tax cut, Mr Eves stated, "We are trying to put money back into the hands of hardworking taxpaying Ontarians."

Interjections: Hear, hear.

Mr Bartolucci: Certainly, many of the members on the government side have said that today, and I hear from some of the members, "Hear, hear." He said it, but is he right? Let me try to use Sudbury as an example to prove that what you see is not what you're going to get. I would ask Mr Brown, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, to do a quick bit of arithmetic with me.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): This is frightening.

Mr Bartolucci: I say that because he's a very honest man and he will give us the straight facts. We know that the average Sudburian will be receiving \$706 as a tax return after the 30% is fully implemented. If we look at the first year, the promised 15% tax cut, we divide \$706 in half and, Mr Brown, what do we get?

Mr Michael Brown: We get \$358.

Mr Bartolucci: You got it, \$358.

Mr Michael Brown: No, that's wrong. Say \$350.

Mr Bartolucci: All right. Let's go on. It's \$350 and \$350. He said it.

You have to start listening. Let's understand what happens here. The Sudbury Board of Education in a Friday, April 5, article in the Sudbury Star states: "Without any more budget cuts, the board would have an

increase in property taxes in the region by an average of \$240 per taxpayer." That's \$240. You subtract it. That's the problem, Mr Preston. You guys are adding on; you're supposed to be subtracting.

1740

Let's go the regional municipality of Sudbury, which for years and years has had no property tax increases. This year, because of the transfer payments that have been slashed by the province to its partners, they've had to increase taxes by 3.5%. On a home with \$40,000 worth of assessment, that's \$51.32.

Let's go from the region to the city, because the city also has had to increase not taxes, but user fees by 11.9%. If we look at marriage licences, we see that they're going up to \$75.

Mr Michael Brown: It's gone.

Mr Bartolucci: It's gone. The tax break for hard-working Sudburians is gone, but we haven't talked about the increased user fees for pools; the increased user fees for ice rentals; the non-residents' increased library fees; the increased user fees for the bylaw department; the increased user fees for legal agreements; the increased user fees for major athletic complexes. We haven't even dealt with increased user fees for the region.

In summation, because my time is almost up, I have to tell you that the rationale for the 30% tax cut is flawed. It doesn't put money in the pockets; it takes money out and it gives it away. The hardworking, taxpaying Sudburians are going to be paying more for what they used to receive for either nothing or minimal because this 30% tax cut must go to the wealthiest in Ontario and the wealthiest in Sudbury, and I think that's wrong.

I think it would be wise if we listened, if the government would listen to its friend Ralph Klein when he says the Tory plan to cut provincial income tax by 30% is bewildering and, I quote, "To do that, one has to be more than just a politician; one has to be a magician." I would add that for most Ontarians, you also have to be unbalanced.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for Sudbury for actually putting some dollars and cents to this tax cut and to the various increased costs that people are going to be involved in so that people out there will know they won't be getting any money at all in the long run.

There's no issue I've talked about more often over the last year or so, ever since I got involved in the campaign, than that the 30% tax cut is crazier, is weirder, just doesn't make any sense at all. Even the member for Wellington said it was a reckless thing to do in his letter to the Premier, as did four other senior Tory members who unfortunately are not in the cabinet right now, because they could have some influence in that respect.

Everyone I've spoken to without exception in the past year, I cannot honestly remember one person who spoke in favour of a tax cut until we have the deficit in this province down to absolutely zero. That's the only thing that makes sense. Out of the premise that there should be a tax cut while we're also reducing the deficit come all the other matters that this government has dealt with in the past six to eight months, all the cuts it has announced, and I could go through an entire list here of lack of

hospital funding in the amount of \$1.3 billion, of elementary and school lack of funding of \$400 million, cuts to colleges and universities of \$400 million, cuts to municipalities of \$658 billion. I could go on and on, all stemming from this crazy notion that in addition to reducing the deficit on an annual basis, there should also be a tax cut.

It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever, because what it has done is it has caused harm to those individuals that rely on the system in one way or another, that rely on the social services of this province, that rely on the universities and schools of this province, that rely on the hospitals of this province or that rely on any kind of care at all that one needs from the province. The question quite simply is if wasn't for the tax cut, the cuts that have been done to a lot of the other areas could be done by about half, and that is the bottom line.

What we really have in this province, the way I see it, is a great distribution of wealth. We have a situation where the people that are better off are saying: "Give us a tax cut. We'll get most of the money." As my friend from Essex South has already stated, more than 51% of the tax cut will go to people making \$75,000 or more, and people making \$35,000 or less will only be getting 7% of the total money that's available for them.

The well-to-do in this province have said, "Give us the tax cut," and the people that are the most vulnerable in this province will no longer have those kind of services available to them which they require to rely on. I think that tells us a lot about our society. It tells us we are simply not as caring a society as we at one time were and we simply do not care about our neighbour as much as we did in the past.

I think everyone would agree that over a reasonable period of time the budget should be balanced and there should be no deficit in this province. But to accentuate that problem by also cutting the revenue side of things, by giving people the tax cut that this government is proposing, is simply doing too much harm to too many people in this province. It's very interesting that even people like Ralph Klein, who is regarded as the Conservative guru out west, is saying that this doesn't make any sense at all.

Mr Crozier: Now he's the Reform guru.

Mr Gerretsen: He may be the Reform guru as well.

Everyone loves a tax cut. We would all like a tax cut. The point simply is that we cannot afford it right now. We cannot afford it until the deficit is down to zero, because during the next four to five years, as has already been indicated by a number of other speakers, the public debt of this province, as a result of the tax cut, is going from \$96 billion to over \$120 billion.

I will be supporting this motion and I would urge some of the fairminded individuals on the government side to support this motion as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Wildman has moved want of confidence motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1754.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): All those in favour of Mr Wildman's non-confidence motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Hampton, Howard	McLeod, Lyn
Boyd, Marion	Kormos, Peter	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Lankin, Frances	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Laughren, Floyd	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud
Gerretsen, John	Martin, Tony	Wood, Len

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Preston, Peter
Baird, John R.	Harnick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael D.	Ross, Lillian
Bassett, Isabel	Hastings, John	Runciman, Bob
Boushy, Dave	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn

Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill

Johnson, David
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Munro, Julia
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Parker, John L.
Pettit, Trevor

Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 21, the nays 62.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Richard Patten, Trevor Pettit, Peter L. Preston,
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Wednesday 10 April 1996

Mercredi 10 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 April 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Today I would like to give the House a lesson in Harris mathematics. The Premier's mathematics work something like this: If you take \$6 billion in spending cuts, then add the \$6 billion it will cost to finance the promised tax cut, somehow, as if by a miracle, the deficit will disappear and the budget will be magically balanced.

These may be the principles upon which Mikeconomics are based, but in the real world the net gain is zero: nothing gained, everything lost. In the end, the people of Ontario will still be spending \$1 million an hour more than they take in. The rich will end up getting an extra tax bonanza while the gross provincial debt will exceed \$130 billion. The end result will see the middle class and the poor left to pick up the pieces. The people of Ontario need tax relief, but fear financial suicide.

Finally, when I went to school six minus six equalled zero, but I guess when the Premier is getting his arithmetic lesson from the Minister of Education, the flawed logic of this tax break makes sense.

SCIENCE OUTREACH PROGRAM

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Recently, Science North in Sudbury received a letter from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to advise that funding of the science outreach program will expire this year. This is a serious blow to our agency, especially as the operating grant Science North receives from the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation is already lower than all four other major cultural attractions located in southern Ontario.

The loss of the northern development and mines grant directly affects outreach services in northern Ontario. These have focused specifically on the delivery of science education in our special part of the province. The consequences of this decision include:

Firstly, a 50% reduction in the outreach program in northwestern Ontario. Last year Science North provided services to 48,000 people over 98 days; this year it will deliver programming to only 18,000 people over 42 days.

Secondly, a 50% reduction in the discovery camps in both the northeast and northwest. The number of weeks will be reduced from 16 to eight, and the children in Red Lake, Fort Frances, Dryden, Terrace Bay and Geraldton will not be serviced at all.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 avril 1996

Thirdly, the complete elimination of science teacher workshops for teachers in the elementary school panel.

Our government initiated the grant because it allowed children and teachers in northern Ontario to access important science education programming. The cancellation leaves northerners at a distinct disadvantage, and this is yet another example of the impact of this government's cuts in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

VICEROY HOMES

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to bring attention to a significant achievement by a local business in my riding. Viceroy Homes is making inroads into the Japanese market and is creating year-round employment at its plant in Port Hope. Its most recent announcement is an agreement with a major builder in Japan. This agreement is one of about 30 formal and informal ones with Japanese business clients.

When the company was first founded in the 1960s, most of its products were sold in Canada and the United States. Recently, however, Viceroy has been taking advantage of international opportunities. Today, almost all of its current production goes offshore. Apart from Japan, Viceroy now exports to Germany, Korea, Hungary and France.

This growth in exports has also meant growth in employment at the plant in Port Hope. Seasonal employment, which was a norm in the past, has been replaced by employment which is steady throughout the year. In fact, employment levels in 1996 are expected to reach 160, almost double the total of 1994.

I'm confident that with the policies of this government, by making Ontario a more attractive place for investment, we will see many, many more of these success stories in the future.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to address a study that was commissioned by St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton, reported in today's Hamilton Spectator.

The study has shown that residents of Hamilton have an unusually high incidence of respiratory problems. It shows that people in Hamilton not only suffer from more respiratory problems, but are more likely to change jobs and suffer other environmental factors as a result of these breathing problems, a serious concern that involves many health and environmental concerns in Hamilton. The survey included Montreal, Winnipeg, Halifax and PEI.

Hamiltonians may have more breathing disorders because of higher industrial air pollution, and more study

and research is necessary on this. We need to find out why this is occurring in our community. We need a joint effort by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment and Energy to solve this problem. We cannot allow and afford the ministries to work in isolation and not be able to address the environmental impact on health and Hamiltonians.

What is also a concern is that the finding comes at a time when the health action task force has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton. This closure will impact the chest and allergy clinic which is doing a great deal of the study and which will be the leader in years to come in ensuring that Hamiltonians are protected from environmental fallout and impact.

I ask this government to act quickly and to ensure that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment immediately launch a joint coordinated study to find out why Hamilton is suffering such difficulties and take the necessary steps to remedy the problem.

1340

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): During the last election we heard Mike Harris promise categorically to protect funding for classroom education. Well, that promise didn't last very long, as in the November economic statement we saw cuts to the education system in elementary and secondary schools amount to \$400 million, which the Minister of Education and Training himself has admitted really amounts to \$800 million at least, because of the difference in fiscal years. We know that was done for the government to be able to find money to finance its tax cut of 30%.

We see today, as we begin debate later on on Bill 34, some of the so-called tools this minister and this government will be implementing to allow for that cut to be made: cuts to adult education, the gutting of kindergarten across this province and, the latest in the measures, the use of property taxes now in areas like Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa, and I say ultimately in other areas, to come back to the provincial coffers to help them fund the provincial income tax cut they want to give to the wealthiest citizens in this province. And then, in a classic Snobelenism, we heard yesterday the minister say, "There has been some advice to our ministry that legally there needs to be a change in the Education Act so that boards can share with the province."

I say to the minister at least in Metropolitan Toronto people are interested in sharing, because injured workers, pensioners and others are having a hard time making the property tax bill now without having to contribute back to the Minister of Education.

CLARKE TOWNSHIP BICENTENNIAL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It is my pleasure today to stand to recognize the bicentennial celebrations of Clarke township and its founding families. Two hundred years ago the first European settlers arrived in Clarke township, located in my riding of Durham East. Two founding families, the Bates and the Lovekins, arrived within weeks, possibly days, of each other.

Early in 1796, Roger Bates and his family came from Vermont, via Quinte. They cleared the land, built their home and planted oats. Around the same time, Richard Lovekin Sr arrived from county Cork, Ireland, via the US via Newark-Niagara-on-the-Lake to clear the land and to build a dwelling, which exists today, for his family, who followed in the spring. His descendants still reside in the original homestead.

These founding families led the way for others, who worked hard to establish the prosperous farms and thriving communities spread around Clarke township. They helped mould our nation as a whole through their contributions to our society.

I would invite each one of you to visit Newcastle in Clarington, part of Clarke township, over the summer and join with me in celebrating 200 years of this settlement, a commitment and accomplishment to its peoples and its founders.

I would also like to thank Bill Bagnell and Mark Jackman, two local historians, for bringing this to my attention.

UNIVERSITY FINANCING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I would like to acknowledge some bright young men and women from Queen's University with us here today, members of the Queen's Alma Mater Society. For the past two days they have been meeting with MPPs on a very pressing matter.

As part of November's economic statement, Ernie Eves promised a consultative process to look into issues related to university funding and restructuring. The process consists of a white paper drafted by the Minister of Education and Training, followed by a four- to six-month consultation period by a small task force.

Ontario's students have been making the case that, as a most important component of the post-secondary sector, they should have representation on this central committee. Their requests have been denied by the minister on the basis that student representation is unnecessary as the committee will consult widely with students.

The discussion paper was to be released, and the committee named, by the minister in January of this year. Neither has yet happened. With the delay in releasing the white paper, students fear that consultation will now take place over the summer months when undergraduate students are not on campus. This would be a grave mistake.

The Common Sense Revolution promised to establish an income-contingent loan repayment program in order to guarantee accessibility to post-secondary education. While tuition fees will be rising by 20% next year at most universities, no real improvements will have been made to the student loan program. Every day the government waits before unveiling its program means more hard-working students will not be able to attend university.

Minister, will you assure the students of this province that the views of Ontario's students will be listened to, and that you will reconsider and appoint students to this committee?

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): The attack by this government on workers and the most vulnerable in our society continues. Their recently announced intention to follow through with workfare is yet another piece of the puzzle. Again, we see the picture that Mike Harris and his government have of Ontario. It means reduced workplace health and safety training. It means closure of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, which had workers governing 50% of that agency. With their anti-worker Bill 7, where scabs are once again legalized in the province of Ontario, it's now easier for employers to bust unions. We're going to see the privatization and the povertization of public sector jobs as they're sold off to follow the hard-line ideology of this government.

Now workfare, something we last saw in this province during the Depression. An exact replication of what happened then is happening now, where this government is blaming those who are suffering from the economic situation we find ourselves in. As was said by Susan West, a planner at the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth:

"Jobs in all professions have been radically reduced. This is particularly true in the teaching and health care fields. So, will these people need welfare when they can't make ends meet? Possibly. Will workfare help them find full-time work? I think not. But welfare needs to be in place" so those of us who can't provide for our basic needs can do so.

When will the attack on working people stop?

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today as the member for Scarborough Centre to bring to the attention of this House the great public consultations our government is undertaking. Last evening, at the request of the Minister of Finance, I hosted a pre-budget consultation focus group meeting in Scarborough to solicit input and recommendations for the minister as the government prepares for our first budget.

The focus group consisted of 20 individuals representing a number of sectors and a diversity of views. It was, as many at the meeting stated, an excellent cross-section of my community. I was pleased to have residents who voted NDP, Liberal and Conservative in the last election as part of the group. The group provided me with great recommendations and I presented all of them to the Minister of Finance.

This, for the members opposite, is what real and meaningful public consultation is all about. Public consultation isn't about consulting with a few friendly people who have the same ideas you do. It isn't about pretending to really listen. Consultations are not about selling your message; they're about listening and examining. Our government, the Mike Harris government, is undertaking real, open and honest consultations with the public.

The Common Sense Revolution was written completely from our public consultations. We consulted before the election, we consulted during the election and, no matter

what those members try to sell to the media, this government is continuing to consult with the public today. We will continue to consult throughout our mandate because, unlike the former two governments in Ontario, we understand what it really means to consult.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MEMBERS' COMPENSATION

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): In the Common Sense Revolution, we promised:

"We will end the sweet deals politicians have created for themselves.... MPPs' pensions will be abolished and replaced with an RRSP...program similar to those used by professionals in Ontario. The tax-free benefits paid to politicians will also be abolished. They will be paid a straight salary, just like ordinary Ontarians."

Today, we are delivering on those promises. For too long, members of this Legislature have received excessive pensions and hidden tax-free allowances that are unacceptable to the taxpayers we serve. Later today, I will introduce legislation that will abolish the MPPs' gold-plated pension plan and get rid of our tax-free allowances. At last, the salaries and total compensation paid to members will be open and understandable.

Let me first deal with the gold-plated pension plan, which has been simultaneously criticized and ignored by governments of all political stripes for decades. Unlike our predecessors, this government is taking action to end a gold-plated pension scheme that has few equals anywhere and is far beyond pension plans available to other Ontarians. In its place, as promised, we will set up an RRSP-type retirement savings arrangement for MPPs, similar to those available to many Ontarians.

The government, as the employer, will contribute the equivalent of 5% of an MPP's salary to the RRSP-type retirement savings arrangement. This new arrangement will save taxpayers almost \$1.5 million annually.

1350

We have drawn a line as of the election last year. Members first elected on or after June 8, 1995, will not be entitled to any defined pension benefits paid for by taxpayers. Members re-elected on or after June 8 will have their pensionable service and earnings frozen as of June 7, 1995. Benefits for retired members, their spouses and dependants will remain unchanged.

Under the former plan, pension benefits were available to former MPPs who had served as few as five years, no matter what their age. Someone as young as 40, with 15 years of service, could receive a full pension for life. That is unacceptable. By contrast, under the new RRSP-type arrangement, a person will not be allowed to draw retirement income until they retire and attain the age of 55.

To terminate the existing benefit arrangements, annuities will be purchased to cover the pensions of retired members, their spouses and dependants. All members with benefits earned under the old plan who have not yet

retired will have the appropriate funds transferred to a locked-in retirement plan.

Today I'm also introducing a major change in the way MPPs are paid. Under the new legislation MPPs' total compensation will be reduced.

The Ontario MPP Compensation Commission, an independent group of experts, examined pay levels across a broad spectrum of positions with comparable responsibilities and recommended total compensation for members of \$110,000 a year. The commission also calculated that in 1993 the true value of an MPP's compensation, taking into account hidden tax-free allowances and other benefits which most Ontarians do not get, was almost \$99,000 a year.

Just over two weeks ago, this Legislature passed a bill to freeze compensation for members at social contract levels. On a comparable basis, this amounted to freezing compensation at \$93,389 a year.

Under the legislation being tabled today, the salary for a member of the Legislature will be \$78,007 a year; the benefits associated with that annual salary will be \$6,958; the employer's RRSP-type contribution will be \$3,900 a year. Total compensation, therefore, will be \$88,865, approximately 20% lower than the commission recommended, 10% lower than MPPs received in 1993, pre-social contract, and about 5% lower than current levels.

For the first time in Ontario's history, the public will know exactly what members are paid and how they are paid. This legislation puts MPPs on a straight salary; it eliminates tax-free allowances; it ends tax-free extra pay for committee work.

With these measures, we are bringing a further openness and accountability to government. Our actions are consistent with our commitment to reduce the cost and size of government. Ministers are preparing business plans to define those core functions in which they should be engaged. We have cut the number of ministers by about a third, from 27 in the previous administration to the current level of 19. We will, as promised, also introduce legislation to reduce the number of MPPs from 130 to 103.

This government believes in leading by example. Today's measures are consistent with our savings and restructuring program. The compensation levels established today will be directly linked to our performance in dealing with the deficit. Therefore, not until the deficit is eliminated and the budget balanced will we give any consideration to changing these levels of compensation. These actions are also consistent with the commitment we made in the Common Sense Revolution to restore the public's faith in the service of its elected members. Today we are making good on that commitment.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I appreciate the fact that this has been a difficult issue for the government to deal with, and I further appreciate the fact that they have kept us informed about what they were looking at over a period of time and that our caucuses were fully briefed on the announcement the minister would be making today at our caucus meeting this morning.

The decision on MPPs' pay—if I may deal in reverse order with the minister's presentation—although I suspect

a tough one to make, in my view is a reasonable one given these times of restraint. I think MPPs have long recognized that we have to set an example, and that's why our pay has essentially been frozen, if not reduced, for a significant number of years now. But what we also agree with is that this is a more rational way of presenting our compensation. As the minister has said, it means that our full compensation package is transparent to the public, is clearly understood and is completely taxable. We agree with those principles.

On the matter of pensions, we have agreed in the past and continue to agree with the ending of the pension plan. We in our party some time prior to the last election were actually the first to call for a reform of the pension plan because it was our belief that MPPs should not be receiving pensions which were so clearly out of step with what anybody in the public or private sector would receive. The Conservative Party under Mr Harris said that they thought we should simply end the pension plan, move to an RRSP plan. We concurred with that at the time. The government has now acted on that commitment. We respect that and we are pleased that the issue of MPPs' pay and pension is now being dealt with.

This issue of MPPs' pay and pension is one which indeed has challenged not just this government but successive governments. It's never an easy thing to deal with what is essentially your own compensation. I think the challenge for governments has been to ensure that MPPs are compensated in a way which is seen to be fair and reasonable by the public who both elect us and pay our salaries and who in turn, I truly believe, respect the value of the work we do as elected representatives on their behalf. I believe it's in that spirit that the government has presented those proposals, and in that spirit we respond.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I would join the Leader of the Opposition in thanking the government for keeping us up to date as they came to the realization—and I'm going to be as gracious as I possibly can—that this wasn't quite as simple as the Common Sense Revolution thought it was. We have all understood that, but in the end, I think the package that has come forward reflects the principles that all three political parties enunciated before the last election; that is, to make sure the salaries we receive are all taxable so that the public understands very clearly that we're all being treated exactly the same way. That's a principle we all support.

I would encourage the government to go one step additional, and that is to take the necessary steps to make sure that all politicians in Ontario—school board trustees and municipal councillors—have their income taxed as well. That's a step controlled by legislation by this provincial government, and I think it's a step the government should take.

1400

We need to take a look at more detail. We've had a briefing this morning and my leader and I had a briefing last week on the pensions, and I think it's in line with the principles all three parties enunciated before the last election. I would be less than honest if I didn't say we had some reservations about the privatization approach.

We want to take a look at the cost to the taxpayers for administering that plan and whether there is a cheaper way of doing it in the public sector. But the principles themselves are ones we have been advised of and again are in line with the approach we talked about before the last election.

I do want to say, though, and I think a lot of members would agree with me on this, that we've got to be very careful in whatever we do with pay and pension in this place, to make sure we understand that in the last 25, 30 years there's been a vast change in the makeup of this Legislature. Part of that is because pay, pension and benefits have allowed more people, men and women from all walks of life, to participate in this place. In the past, it was primarily lawyers and businessmen, because they had the ability to come into this place and still have their private incomes and their private resources and it didn't matter what was paid here. Whatever we do in this place has to make sure we reinforce democracy, and democracy doesn't work if only certain people can afford to be in the Ontario Legislature. One thing that we've got to be very careful about.

The other thing is we've got to be very careful that whatever steps we take do not play into the anti-politician phenomenon that occurs in all democracies and certainly occurs here in Canada, thanks by and large to things like the National Citizens' Coalition and other organizations. My view, and I think the view of all of us, is that elected politicians and the role we play in a democratic society is absolutely fundamental and is an honourable profession and we should not apologize for it. Therefore, while it's easy to go out and campaign, saying, "We're going to get rid of this, we're going to get rid of that and we're going to get even with the politicians," and that will get you votes, in the long run it does not serve democracy very well. By and large, we support the principles that have been outlined today, with the concerns I have expressed on behalf of my caucus.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. As you are aware, the children's aid society of Simcoe county has stated categorically that two families have given up their children for adoption because they could no longer afford to care for them, a direct result of your 21.6% cut in welfare payments.

Since your government took office, and this was statistically shown to us last week, we've seen a 54% rise in the number of people using food banks, we've seen the number of evictions grow and we've seen the number of homeless families increase. You have said that some people choose to be homeless. You have shown a callous disregard for the increase in food bank use. Now, when two children are being given up for adoption because their parents can't afford to look after them as a result of your cuts, your response is to say, "I don't believe that our policy should be singled out."

Premier, I think it's time you take some responsibility for the cold-hearted indifference you have shown towards the impact of your policies on the people of this province and particularly on defenceless children. What do you say to these two children in Simcoe county, both of whom are under the age of 10? How do you explain to them that the reason they're separated from their parents is because you have slashed welfare payments to pay for a tax cut that benefits primarily the well-to-do?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First of all, I do have a response for the member. You will know that neither I nor the minister, who is away today, nor the government can comment specifically on individual cases, but let me talk about some of the information you've presented in the way of your question.

You said that the CAS in Simcoe county has definitively said this. We have checked with the director in Simcoe county, who has definitively said it is not the case. In fact, the agency's communication director confirmed with our office and with CFRB radio this morning that the CAS was not linking these adoption cases to the ministry's welfare rate reductions. So the premise with which you have come forward in your question is absolutely incorrect.

Furthermore, if I might, the individual case worker who went public with the information said on CFRB this morning, when questioned by Mr Stall about the allegation that it was as a result of the cuts: "Well, I don't know that any of them have come saying it's definitely the Harris cuts."

Stall: "Why is it being played that way?"

Shields, the case worker: "Well, we're hearing that there is a tremendous depression, despair and the total sense of any lack of hope for the future, and that is what it is."

So what we have found is that the information brought forward and the premise yesterday and today is totally inaccurate, is totally incorrect, does not come from any credible source, is not confirmed, is in fact denied by the case worker, and is not confirmed by the children's aid society. What we do know is this: They're difficult times for people on welfare today.

I agree with the case worker when she says that generally there is a combination of factors, never any one, but that loss of hope, despair, causes a lot of parents grief and a lot of problems in society. It is indeed that lack of hope, that lack of opportunity, that despair, that our policies are designed to overcome and correct to give more hope and opportunity to all people, particularly those who are on welfare.

Mrs McLeod: Well, Premier, let me tell you that we spoke directly with the children's aid society in Simcoe county yesterday before raising this issue in the House. Her comments and the comments that were made that these children who indeed have been taken into placement by the children's aid society in Simcoe were taken into custody, into care, because the parents could not cope with their care, with their feeding and with their shelter because of the cutbacks you made, were confirmed by every reporter who subsequently contacted the Simcoe children's aid society directly; I think a different answer, Premier, than the government receives, as the funding body, when it contacts the children's aid society.

But I would further say that I agree there is depression and there is despair, and it is to that climate that you have added unbelievably and without conscience by cutting the benefits of families by 21.6% and not seeming to remember that some 50% of the people who depend on those benefits are children. It is the effect of your cutbacks on children that we are talking about today.

Let me take you back to your own words of last May 20, when you were asked on Global Television about the potential impact of what were then your proposed cutbacks on children. You suggested that if people didn't have the money to look after their children, they should give them up to the children's aid society. Your exact words were, "They don't care about their kids, and maybe we need foster parents for the children."

Then last September, just days before the 21.6% cut in benefits took effect, your Minister of Community and Social Services was asked whether the children's aid society should step in if people in the province of Ontario were too poor to feed their children. He said, "If it's a situation where the child is in danger, then the CAS should come in and see what they can do."

My question is straightforward, Premier: Do you and your minister still believe it's a good idea for children to be separated from their parents because they can't cope with your welfare cutbacks?

Hon Mr Harris: No, of course not. I never said the quote you mentioned. I think that was pre-campaign or during the campaign. What the minister said was that we believe it's important that the CAS and the government have the resources to intervene and help and make sure that every child has decent housing and enough food, and indeed that is the goal. In addition to that, we want to make sure that each child and his or her family have some hope and opportunity that things will get better in the future.

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Also, the member indicated that they talked directly with the CAS before raising the question yesterday. The CAS confirmed that your office did talk to them and that the question was raised by your office. The question was, "Are there other circumstances besides financial?" You were told by the CAS office, and they have this on record—we never heard any of that yesterday or today—"Yes, there are other circumstances."

Had you followed the briefing of the children's aid society, you would know that these are never simple cases, that there is a combination of factors, that it is very unfortunate. It is not the first case, of course, in the history of time where children's aid has had to intervene or be helpful. We regret every individual example of that. Our goal is to respond and, as the Deputy Premier said yesterday, to investigate the circumstances to provide every opportunity we can for a parent and child to stay together, and indeed we are doing that.

We are working very hard with our funding levels—10% above the average of the rest of the country, in excess of virtually the rest of the world—and also with the ability to earn back the difference and facilitate that, and with workfare we are offering true hope and opportunity that the short-term assistance we will provide for every child in this province is not ultimately the long-

term solution. Indeed, the long-term solution is that families will be able to look after themselves.

Mrs McLeod: Attempts to deny what has been said do not relieve you of any responsibility for the impact of what you have done. There is no question that those two families in Simcoe county were coping until they were hit with your welfare cutbacks and they could cope no longer. That is clearly what was said to us yesterday.

There is no question, although you attempt to deny what you said during the election campaign, that you made statements about parents who can't care for their children and whether the CAS should come in. There is no denying quotations of what your Minister of Community and Social Services said, that if parents can't care for their children, if they are too poor, the children's aid society should step in. Denying that those statements have been made does not take away your responsibility for what you have clearly done: to cut the support of families by 21.6%, and you have given them no alternative. You sit there and say, "Help them." You have given them no help. You have no program, no proposal that will help those families feed those children.

Premier, you stopped by yesterday for a surprise visit at the Daily Bread Food Bank on your way back from the baseball game. It's my understanding that you made another commitment yesterday that you would at least look at the connection between the rising use of the food banks, the increase in hunger and poverty and your welfare cuts. At the same time that you were apparently making that commitment, because it is a quote attributed to you, the Deputy Premier made a commitment in this House to determine the impact of the cuts on the two families in Simcoe county and what the government can do.

I'd suggest to you that there is no need to review what your cuts are doing. There is ample evidence that those cutbacks have led to more hunger, that they have led to more homelessness and that they have now forced two families to give their children up for adoption. Your policies are hurting children. The question is not, will you review it? The question is, what will you do about it now?

Hon Mr Harris: The member knows she has me at a small disadvantage in that I cannot comment directly on the individual cases. I can assure her that one of them has absolutely nothing to do with the rate cuts at all. That was not the change in circumstance. But we are looking at how we can help, and as the Minister of Community and Social Services has indicated, it is up to the government, his ministry, CAS, all agencies, to intervene and help.

The member mentions the food bank, and she is quite right. I did meet yesterday with the director of the food bank. He has some data that we hope can be very helpful to us in how we can help and how we can assist.

One of the pieces of data we found in looking at this was that between 1986 and 1989, at a time when welfare rates were booming and mushrooming—more and more money, two and three times the rate of inflation, being added to welfare rates—when the economy was booming, unemployment was down, through that period food bank usage went up 100%.

We're trying to analyse, what is it that causes an increase in the use of food banks? When the Liberals

were in office, massive gobs of money to anybody who asked led to a 100% increase in the use of food banks. I don't know whether it was because they threw more money in, but if you look at that example, you would want to analyse, is it our policies, is it reducing welfare payments to 10% above the average? Admittedly, food bank usage has gone back up, not to the record levels when the NDP were in power, but it has gone up and it is disturbing. It was disturbing what happened in the 1980s, the record levels in the 1990s with the NDP were disturbing, and it is disturbing today.

Anybody who says the status quo of the last 10 years worked has not examined the data. We are doing that, and we are determined to make changes that will truly help people, help children, and meet the mutual goal of Gerard Kennedy and myself, that we put—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The question has been answered. New question.

Mrs McLeod: Just for the record, a family of four on welfare in Ontario receives less than that same family in Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): On that, my second question is also to the Premier. I would like to turn to yet another area where the government's policies are hurting families and their children. Children and indeed adults with disabilities and their families are currently living with deep anxiety and fear. They are afraid you're going to cut their funding for programs that help them to live independently, they're afraid you're going to privatize some of the services they depend on to build productive lives, and most of all they're afraid you're going to transfer the management of their programs to the Ministry of Health from the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

One of the reasons they're afraid of that is because they remember what it was like when the Ministry of Health ran programs for the disabled. I want to describe it for you in the words of the Ontario Family Alliance, an organization representing thousands of people with disabilities and their families. At that time, those disabled were "warehoused"—these are their words—"subjected to custodial care, and sometimes not even that." They were "not treated as human beings." They were "stigmatized according to their conditions, drugged, forced into physical restraints and left to languish on mats on the floor."

Premier, I am not suggesting for one moment that you or anyone else would ever condone going back to those kinds of conditions, but I suggest to you that you will not save any money by transferring the service to the Ministry of Health unless you do reduce the service, so why would you even consider moving the service from community and social services to health when it causes these families so much anxiety?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I have no idea whether that is being considered. Any anxiety is being caused by wildly inaccurate speculation. Our goal is to truly help the disabled, give them a hand up. Many of them have told us in their discussions with the minister

and the ministry staff that they have become disillusioned with policies of dependency. They are asking for changes; the minister is consulting with them to make changes, and any changes will be as a result of those negotiations and discussions with the disabled community itself.

I understand some of the concerns out there, because they call my office as well. When they find out that the allegations or the fears come from wild, speculative information being leaked by somebody—I don't know who—they say: "Thank you very much, Mr Harris. Who could possibly be so cruel as to try and conjure up those fears for perhaps partisan political reasons?" I say, "I don't know."

1420

Mrs McLeod: The Premier might better understand the concerns if he had read the brief sent to him by the Ontario Family Alliance, in which they outline their very strong objections to the impact of your government's policies on people with disabilities.

The transfer to the Ministry of Health was only one of their concerns. They're also very concerned that your government's planning to privatize services to people with developmental disabilities, because they remember too when those private services were offered in the past. That was a time when children were housed in profit-making institutions with sweet-sounding names like Ark Eden and Lakewood and Sweetbriar and Sunnysdale and Elm Tree. All of these institutions were shut down or had charges laid against them due to substandard care given to the children who lived there. In some cases, children died as a result of the poor care they received. The parents of children with developmental disabilities just don't want to take a chance of returning to those days, and I don't think there's a person in Ontario who would want to return to those days.

Can you assure those families that they don't need to worry about services for the disabled being privatized? Will you commit today that these services will not be privatized, that this too is just wild speculation?

Hon Mr Harris: What I am prepared to commit to you is this, that we have responded to the disabled community who have said to us that the status quo is unacceptable. What they have indicated to us is that they would like changes to support community-based care, they would like programs that are individual-based that offer family support services instead of some of the institutional care now and bureaucratic programs, that they'd like more flexibility as family members.

We have responded in discussions with them as to how we could reform the failed policies currently in place that they're asking to be changed to better serve the disabled, and we will reflect those concerns in any new program that may come forward to assist the disabled.

Let me confirm as well the commitment we made pre-campaign, during the campaign, post-campaign and with every announcement we've made: There is no reduction of funding to the disabled. What we are looking at is, is there a better way to spend those existing dollars? Is there a better way to help them in some of the ways they are asking for themselves? We are prepared to listen, to consult with them and to respond to what they are asking us to do.

Mrs McLeod: What the Premier said is simply not the case. As a starter, those same families who had their welfare payments reduced by 21.6% are families, many of them, who have disabled children. Try and tell me that is not a cut to the disabled and a cut that hurts children.

Premier, the Ontario Family Alliance represents thousands of people with disabilities and their families in this province. They've sent you a brief, they've outlined their concerns. They want you to know that they are not some kind of special-interest group. They are parents, they are taxpayers, they are committed members of their communities and their only special interest is in the health and the welfare of their children.

The leaders of the Ontario Family Alliance have written to you. They've asked for a meeting with you. They want a chance to explain how a 10% cut to programs for the disabled would affect their families, their children. They want a chance to tell you why they don't want to see their children returned to institutions where they're poorly treated and where they're shut away from the chance to build productive lives. They want to explain to you how your policies are setting their children back, not helping them lead independent lives.

You have not been prepared to accept the responsibility for your policies and the impact that they are having on families and children. Will you at least have the courage to meet with the parents of these children and hear their concerns?

Hon Mr Harris: I do, on a relatively regular basis. I have done so in my riding pre- and post-campaign period. In any event, I will meet with the alliance, as will my office, as will the minister, as will others as well. We're happy to do that. What they have said to me, by way of brief, is mostly concerns over wild speculation and rumours they've heard. I share their concerns over those rumours. I think they're disgraceful. I think it's disgraceful politics. I think it's embarrassing. We're on the same wavelength. They want to improve the health and welfare of their children; so do we, and we'll work together to do it.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a question to the Premier. I say to you, you've got to take this far more seriously than you have. People woke up here in the province this morning to hear you on radio saying your cuts are "just one of the excuses" people use for not taking care of their kids. Your Deputy Premier, mind you, at least understood the seriousness of it when he told a reporter yesterday, "I don't think it's anybody's intention in any of these reduction exercises to have that kind of direct impact on people."

My question is pretty straightforward. Where on earth did you and your government get the idea that your cuts aren't going to hurt children here in the province of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): One of the statistics was that as the dependency increased and the rules changed, as the hope for jobs and training disappeared, with more and more money just to sit home and do nothing, which your Premier said was wrong—as that increased, food bank usage went up, the number of

people on welfare went up, the number of children dependent on the state went up. We looked at those policies and said, "Gee, they didn't work." They obviously, by any measure, by any statistic, were an unmitigated disaster for people on welfare, for children, for the most vulnerable in our society.

When we looked at the failure of the last 10 years and the two governments that implemented those policies, we said, "Surely we can do better than that," so we have embarked upon a consultative process, a process of providing the same amount of dollars but that to get those dollars, those who are able would have to work up to five hours a week, in most cases, at minimum wage. We would do everything we can to assist them. We want to break that cycle of dependency. We want to truly help children have a better hope and have a better future.

We started with every statistical piece of evidence saying that what you did for five years was wrong, a disaster and did not help, in fact worsened, the situation. We challenged that status quo, and we are working now in consultation with a number of groups and a number of those affected about how we can give them more help. I am confident that at the end of the day they are going to look back, children and parents alike, and say thank you.

Mr Kormos: Premier, please. I tell you that the situation in Simcoe county isn't unique. Just last week, Bob Pickens, the executive director of the Leeds-Grenville family and children's services, told his local newspaper that reports of child abuse and neglect have almost doubled over the last four months since the introduction of your cuts in November 1995. He said there is no significant event other than your social assistance cuts that would have caused the caseload to skyrocket like that and that he, as executive director of family and children's services, can only conclude that the financial pressures on parents who rely on social assistance are causing this upsurge in abuse of children.

Do you really understand how serious this is? These are real people, real kids. You're creating a cycle, all right—a cycle of abuse, a cycle of economic violence for which these children and their families and their communities are going to pay a price for years. Those parents weren't just waiting for an excuse to abuse their children. Will you acknowledge that you've got some responsibility here that you've got to respond to?

Hon Mr Harris: We do acknowledge that we have a responsibility to respond to any single case of child abuse, wherever it may occur, at any point in time, anywhere across the province, and of course we are responding to every individual case.

You quoted the executive director, who we have talked to and who confirms "they have experienced increased reports of physical abuse and neglect, from nine cases a month, on average, to 15." This is of very grave concern to all of us. The executive director stated, "The link between the increase and the reduced welfare rate is speculative and it is premature to determine whether this four-month period represents a trend."

You see, it doesn't matter why. Any individual case is a concern for us and we must respond as quickly and as meaningfully as we possibly can to every single individual case of child abuse. I also want to tell you that we

need to respond and look at whether any program we have in the government is contributing to that. We are assessing that; we are looking at that information. All we know for a fact is that what you did was a failure.

1430

Mr Kormos: Premier, please. We've witnessed, in January of this year, a 25% increase in evictions in the city of Toronto alone from the year prior. We're witnessing unprecedented numbers of children occupying the overfilled hostels of Toronto and other communities across the province. The bottom line is that families have to have an adequate income that allows them to take care of their kids, an income that doesn't leave them burdened with the unmanageable stress of coping with the poverty you're imposing on them.

In the meantime, they also need help to cope, but the agencies where they get that help, as you know, or ought to know, are stretched to the limit. Your own government caucus members heard the children's aid societies tell the standing committee on social development that the government is providing no funding, so that virtually no preventive services for Ontario families can be provided. Your cuts have meant that family and children's services are restricted to basic child protection as compared to preventive services. These are the things your Minister of Community and Social Services describes as core services.

But you see, it's not good enough. In view of what you've said today, in view of the fact that there is indeed a 44% increase in the reports of child abuse to family and children's services in the Leeds-Grenville area, are you prepared at least to ensure that there's an inquiry into the impact of your cuts on Ontario families and on child welfare and safety here in the province of Ontario? That should be important enough to you.

Hon Mr Harris: We are of course asking for impacts of all the government programs. The only conclusive thing we have so far is that your policies were the main reason for loss of jobs, your policies were the main reason for the increase in the number of people on welfare, in the amount of dependency and the loss of hope. That we do know for a fact, and we have enough statistical evidence to know that. I hope you are encouraging us to abandon your failed policies and attempt to come up with something better—better for children, better for those who are on welfare, better for those who are disadvantaged. Yes, we are assessing our policies, we are assessing everything we are doing, and I would tell you that if you'd honestly assessed what you did, you wouldn't have done a lot of those things that created the mess in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The Premier seems to be taking the attitude that the poor are always with us and not acknowledging that we're talking about changes that have taken place since the last election, changes that are hurting children.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'd like to move to another area of government change that is having a

significant, serious effect on the children of the province, and that's in education, the broken promise of the government not to affect classroom education for children in the province.

People all over Ontario are concerned about the cuts in funding for education and how they will affect classrooms in Ontario. On June 8, nobody voted for a \$1-billion cut in education funding in Ontario. Now we're about to embark on the second reading debate of Bill 34, which is the minister's toolkit for implementing those cuts by boards of education and separate school boards across the province.

Students, teachers and parents all across Ontario are concerned about the effects of Bill 34 when it is implemented by this government. Will the minister commit now to having the government agree to hold province-wide hearings in committee across Ontario so people from all over Ontario will have an opportunity to make their views known on the implementation and the effects of Bill 34 and the budget cuts to education in Ontario?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the honourable member for the question. As the member knows, the finance minister announced back on November 29 that we would be looking for savings outside of the classroom in the education system in Ontario and that the reductions we're looking for in the next year amount to some 3% of the cost of our schools in this province—3% is what we're talking about, \$400 million. The measures in Bill 34 address that 3% reduction. I think it's important that on public record we have the actual information out there.

As the member knows, this bill will come forward later on this afternoon for second reading. We look forward to a rigorous debate, a line-by-line debate on this, and I know our House leader will work with the other House leaders to determine what the process should be for that.

But I believe this is good news for the young people of Ontario because this education system in Ontario must be accountable, must be high quality, but most importantly it must also be affordable so we can protect the social services that those young people will come to depend on in this province, as I have in my lifetime.

Mr Wildman: The minister can't continue to try to—well, I guess he can continue to try, but it won't work. He can't fool the population into thinking that a \$400-million cut in a four-month period, which annualizes to \$800 million to \$1 billion, can be taken out of the system without affecting classroom education. It's just impossible; it's impossible to do that. The minister will know that just 32 school boards in Ontario have already issued over 10,000 layoff notices. You can't have those kinds of cuts in staffing without affecting classroom education. It's impossible.

Since the minister has said he will consult with his House leader, who will deal with the other House leaders in determining the process, is he not aware that the government House leader has indicated to our House leader and the opposition House leader that he will consult with you to determine whether there should be across-the-province hearings? What is your position? What are you going to tell the government House leader?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I am not surprised that the honourable member opposite cannot see the possibility of a

government doing more with less, making better use of taxpayer dollars, having a better value for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. I'm not surprised that the member opposite does not see that the future of our children and our children's children depends on our getting a grip on our debt and our deficit in this province. I'm not surprised that the member opposite can't see the connection with reducing the cost of government and becoming more efficient and more effective with our taxpayer dollars, cannot see the connection with the future for our youth, for jobs in this province.

If the government of the member opposite had taken these steps five years ago, we would have a more effective, higher-quality and, more importantly, a more affordable education system in the province and the children of this province would have a better opportunity in this province. We are taking those issues on now. I have told the member opposite I would talk to our House leader about this issue in terms of how to present this second reading, and I will do so.

Mr Wildman: Will the minister advise his House leader that he is in agreement with the proposal to have province-wide public hearings by the committee or not?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I will discuss this with our House leader and he will discuss it with the House leaders of the other parties.

1440

LEGAL AID

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I rise today on an issue of equal justice for all citizens, and my question is to the Attorney General. Sir, the Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services clinic today released some 6,000 petition cards from all over the province essentially asking for justice for all, and I would ask that they be delivered to the minister. The cards read:

"I believe in justice for all, which includes competent legal advice and representation before courts and administrative tribunals. In order to maintain a functional judicial system, I call upon your government to continue current funding for legal aid certificates and independent community legal clinics."

As you know, legal clinics have been working under increased caseloads and uncertainty, serving those who are most critically in need, providing front-line essential services to those who otherwise would have no access to the justice system.

They are not part of the memorandum of agreement and they depend directly upon you for funding. There is a great deal of uncertainty about what they can expect from your ministry in the next while, and I wonder if you could put to rest the confusion and tell us what you plan on doing in terms of continuing funding to this very essential sector.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The funding now being delivered to the certificate side of legal aid is funding that was agreed upon between the last government and the Law Society of Upper Canada, which administers the legal aid plan, and there has not been any cuts nor will there be any reduction in that funding. That funding is

firm and I have said that on many, many, many occasions.

In so far as rumours exist about cuts to the clinic system, they are rumours, they are unfounded. They are being promoted by people who haven't been hearing what I have been saying, and quite simply they are nothing more than rumour.

Ms Castrilli: I'm assuming that means the minister is guaranteeing funding at current levels, and I will ask him to elaborate on that. Let me also say that Band-Aid solutions in this sector are really not enough. You're on record as saying that a specific study on the future of service delivery would take place. To date, we've had no details. I think we owe it to the citizens of Ontario to ensure that they all have equal access to the justice system. I wonder if you might comment on both those questions.

Hon Mr Harnick: I have indicated, and I will indicate again, that any discussions about reductions to the clinic system would be contrary to the memorandum of understanding. I have indicated that we are living by that memorandum of understanding, and I don't know what more I can say to satisfy those who wish to promote rumours.

In terms of the second aspect of your question, yes, I have indicated that there will be a study of legal aid delivery to ensure that quality legal aid services can be delivered to the maximum of the funding available, and there is work now being done to create that study. That study I hope will take place in consultation with the Law Society of Upper Canada.

I want to say to the member, because it's a very important question, that in order to do this study properly, the groundwork has to be laid. There are so many different aspects to it and so many different people who must be involved that it is taking some time. I hope we now have a period of at least three years of stable funding for legal aid. I hope we can implement this study and that we can start the business of negotiating a continuation to the memorandum of understanding based on what the study will tell us so we can provide the maximum amount of quality legal aid services to those in the province of Ontario who need them.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Another question for the Minister of Education and Training. Does the minister know what the following boards have in common: Brant, Dufferin, Durham, Grey, Haldimand, Haliburton, Halton, Hastings, Lincoln, Niagara South, Norfolk, Peel, Perth, Peterborough, Prince Edward, Simcoe, Waterloo, Wellington, Wentworth and York Region?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the honourable member opposite for an excellent question. I will try not to answer too long, but I think all those school systems have yellow buses, students, classrooms, teachers, trustees, principals, vice-principals, books, pencils—the litany. The list is very long.

Mr Wildman: Also these boards have another matter in common. All these boards have cancelled junior

kindergarten programs. That's the main issue we face in the province in terms of classroom education and maintenance of this government's promise to the people of Ontario. Many more boards haven't made final decisions with regard to the future of junior kindergarten programs.

The minister will know that last Saturday on television he said, "I think there's good evidence that early childhood education makes a difference." With that in mind, why is it that your government has targeted junior kindergarten programs for cuts, has made it optional but at the same time cut funding to boards so that the boards really have no option but to cut junior kindergarten programs? Why is it that this government and this minister, despite acknowledging the importance of early childhood education, are shortchanging the children who are going to these programs and ensuring that boards across Ontario will cut the junior kindergarten programs?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm glad the honourable member opposite, leader of the third party, has cleared up what was in common with all of those boards. I do submit, however, that they do all have trustees, principals, vice-principals, teachers, pupils, classrooms, desks, pencils, and that my list was also accurate.

The member opposite knows that this government lives up to its commitment to the people of Ontario, and we very clearly in the Common Sense Revolution made a commitment to the people of Ontario to restore junior kindergarten to a local option, to let local boards make the decision. And the honourable member opposite knows that in our statement on November 29, the finance minister's statement, we said very clearly that we would pick up the province's share of funding junior kindergarten for those school boards that chose to offer the program.

The member opposite also knows that this government is committed to a review of early childhood education opportunities, particularly for at-risk kids across the province, and we are conducting that review now. So we are living up to the promises and the commitments we've made to the people of Ontario one by one, every one of them.

PETERBOROUGH COUNTY PLANNING

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I would like to address my question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The county of Peterborough passed its first official plan February 2, 1994, and received ministry approval on November 8, 1994. The county did its utmost to ensure that provincial interests and concerns were addressed. According to regulation 154/95, the county would have to adopt a new plan by December 31, 1997. Since our approval plan is only one-and-a-half years old, it would be more economical to amend our current plan. Peterborough county wants to keep on the official list of prescribed counties to have those official plans.

Minister, would your ministry consider granting the county of Peterborough approval to amend its official plan rather than readopting a new plan, as outlined in regulation 154/95?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for Peterborough for his

question. He's absolutely right: The Peterborough county official plan was approved in November 1994 and there are some changes necessary to reflect this government's policies under Bill 20, the Land Use Planning and Protection Act. We're quite pleased that Peterborough wants to move very quickly on this issue. I am pleased to advise the member that we are prepared to let the county proceed to update the official plan by amendment.

Mr Stewart: Approval of official plans can be a time-consuming process, and more local control of the approval process should be considered. Minister, could Peterborough county be assigned authority as the approval body for lower-tier official plans?

Hon Mr Leach: I thank the member for Peterborough for his excellent question. This government believes strongly in local autonomy, and we have been promoting local autonomy continuously during our term of office. We believe that the counties in Ontario can make good, responsible planning decisions that reflect local needs. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is open to delegating further authority to the county and we would be very pleased to open discussions with him on that issue.

1450

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

Mr Bernard Grandmaitre (Ottawa East): My question is to the Premier. Eleven weeks ago I wrote you a letter expressing my concerns about budget cutbacks to the Office of Francophone Affairs and also what was said inside the House and outside the House about French services. I want to thank you for your response of April 3, and I quote from your letter: "We have no plans to change Bill 8. We intend to provide French-language services in a cost-effective way and will examine the delivery of services in French as we review all services of the Ontario government."

I agree with you, Mr Premier. I think all services should be reviewed. But only a short few days after—three days to be exact—it's been rumoured that the Office of Francophone Affairs will be subject to another cutback of 35%.

My question is a very simple one: Have you completed your review, who have you consulted, and are you serious about a 35% cutback?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think you are aware that there has been a long-standing commitment from my party to provide French-language services and to do so in a cost-effective way. I appreciate the discussions the member and I have had on this over a long period of time, sometimes with me around that part of the House; other times I was down around that part of the House. No decisions, I believe, are finalized. We are reviewing not only the ministry responsible and its budget, but all the ministry budgets, as you know, are under review, and a lot of our programs in French language are delivered by the individual ministries.

I want to assure you of this: We are absolutely committed to providing services. We believe that in a number of areas and in a lot of ministries we can deliver far better services for less money by looking at how we are

doing those. I don't think the member would suggest that the delivery of francophone programs and services should be exempt or singled out from that review. If we can find ways of delivering programs more effectively, I know you would want us to do that, just as we are doing with all our ministries. It is in that context, I can assure you, that they are under review. I wouldn't go with rumours that are out there. I would wait until the final decisions are made and announcements have been made as to how we believe we can deliver those programs, and at what funding level.

Mr Grandmaître: I agree with the Premier; I'm not against a review. But I want you to consult with the francophone community and also improve French services right across the province of Ontario. Mr Premier, I want you to confirm today that you will consult with the francophone community before you introduce another major cutback of 35%. Will you consult with the francophone community?

Hon Mr Harris: I want to be perfectly up front. I don't know what you're talking about, "another major cutback." There is no other major cutback coming for any ministries. There were major cutbacks and targets announced by the Minister of Finance in November, and now we are coming forward with business plans and proposals on how we can achieve those targets. That is the one major cutback and that is what we're working on. I can assure you that we are attempting—the minister is not here today. I will take it up with the minister and the ministry. If there have still not been exhaustive enough consultations with all affected, we will endeavour to do that.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training regarding the fact that a number of boards across the province have had to decide to raise local property taxes in order to protect classroom education in the province. The chairperson of the Waterloo county board budget committee, trustee Gary Schlueter, said this year's budget discussions were not made any easier, given the drastic reductions in grants from the provincial government. As a result, the Waterloo County Board of Education has approved a 1996 budget with a 1.9% increase in the public education portion of the property tax bill for the average homeowner in Waterloo.

Is the minister prepared to recognize and admit that the actions of his government are downloading costs to the local boards and that he's forcing boards to help pay for the protection of classroom education, and in the process is harming the taxpayers as well as the students in the province?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question. I have heard of boards across the province that are looking at the possibility of passing on a tax increase to local taxpayers and I must say that disturbs me, because I believe that the reductions we've talked about—the savings can be found in our education system outside of the classroom.

That's something the Sweeney report, which recently came in and which I know the member opposite has had a chance to look at, also confirmed when it said 47% of the almost \$14 billion that we spend on education in the province is spent outside of the classroom. That report suggested we should move that down to 40%. That's a much larger reduction than we're talking about in Bill 34 that the Minister of Finance announced on November 29. I am surprised that some school boards, instead of looking where they can find reductions and where they can find savings outside of the classroom, would choose the status quo and pass on a tax increase to the local taxpayer.

Mr Wildman: Mr Sweeney did not suggest that education finance reform would make major cuts of \$1 billion in one year out of the education system in Ontario.

I want to point out to the minister that the Waterloo County Board of Education didn't just increase the property tax. They made major cuts as well. They've reduced their special-education budget by \$334,600 and included in that the reduction of over eight teachers for special education; they've reduced 25 teacher-librarian positions; they've cut out the elementary music program in grade 6; they've reduced adult and continuing education programs. So much for your promise in the Common Sense Revolution not to affect classroom education. All of these cuts are classroom education cuts by the Waterloo board and they're brought on by your cuts in grants. At the same time, they're having to increase the local property tax in order to avoid further cuts in programs and in classroom education.

Will the minister admit that the cuts in grants he has announced are not only causing increases in taxes, but are causing cuts in programs and harm to classroom education in Waterloo county and other parts of the province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Let me clarify some of the things the member opposite has brought up. For the second time today I'll clarify this and I hope he'll write this down: The Minister of Finance on November 29 announced a \$400-million reduction for next year in our grants because we believe that those savings are available in the system, and there are indicators that they are. In fact, that \$400 million was mitigated by a freeze on capital spending over that period of time to give school boards more opportunity to bring in the operating changes that need to happen in our system.

I know a proud member of the Liberal Party, Mr Sweeney, who was appointed by your government, came back with a report that suggested that 47% of our spending in education in the province happens outside of the classroom. I don't think it's a laughing matter when 47% of our tax dollars are spent outside of the classroom. That report suggested we lower that to 40% at a maximum.

You talk about school boards. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association gave us a report three or four months ago that suggested we save \$1 billion out of our education system in Ontario; not \$400 million that we're going forward, but \$1 billion. Those savings are available. They're available outside of the classroom, and we must depend upon the school boards making those tough decisions and making those cost reductions outside of the classroom.

SPEED LIMITS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Transportation. Recently, two of my constituents drove down Highway 401 in a bit of an experiment. They drove side by side exactly at the speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour. When they arrived at Trenton, they were pulled over and charged for obstructing traffic. They are now gathering signatures in a petition to try and change the speed limit on 400 series highways to 120 kilometres per hour.

Back in the mid-1970s, we reduced the speed from 70 miles an hour, or 112 kilometres an hour, to 100 to try and save gasoline because of the energy crunch. Certainly, all legislation must be legitimized in the eyes of the public, and obviously the speed limit on Highway 401 is not being recognized.

Do you intend to change the speed limit, and if so, by how much and when?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank the member for Northumberland for his question. While I cannot comment on any individual case, I would like to tell the member, however, I have asked the ministry staff to look at the posted speed limits on the 400 series highways to see if they are appropriate, given that they are built to handle speeds up to 120 kilometres an hour. There are wide considerations we must take into account before we can implement that, but we are looking at it and we are going to consider.

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Mr Galt: According to studies done in the United States, raising speed limits does not increase speeding or the number of accidents. In fact, one of the studies shows that lowering speed limits may actually cause accidents. What will you do to ensure that the speed limit on our highways is the safest?

Hon Mr Palladini: First, let me assure the House and the people of Ontario that road safety is our number one priority. Our work did not end with the announcement we made in October in regard to our safety plans; that was just the beginning. We are always looking for ways to improve the safety of our highways.

Road safety is bigger than just one issue, and while speed is a factor, it is not the only one. We will continue to target a wide range of unsafe driving practices, such as aggressive driving or impaired driving.

I welcome the constructive input of all members of the House or their constituents to see if we can work together and improve safety on our highways.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that the North York Branson Hospital merge with the York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York

Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

TORONTO ISLANDS COMMUNITY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have a petition to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and this petition reads:

"We, the undersigned residents of Algonquin Island, Toronto, respectfully request that you immediately halt the planned severance of four lots on Algonquin Island and that you restrict any building on these lots to single-family dwellings."

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): To the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the provincial debt and deficit are paid down."

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): This petition goes to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important and fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program, or are working single parents, or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers;

"We, the undersigned business owners and child care workers of the Metro community, urge the government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to cut our present child care programs across our province and restore funding to previous levels."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition from a number of people in Guelph. It reads:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario call for the resignation of Brenda Elliott, the Minister of Environment and Energy, for breaching her ministerial oath of office and misuse of ministerial authority, as her decision to fire members of the Ontario Hydro board has been found to be in violation of the Power Corporation Act by Judge Rosenberg, Ontario Court, General Division."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

MOTORCYCLES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure today to present a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas we are in protest of the current Ontario handlebar law which states, 'No part of the handlebar shall exceed a height of 380 millimetres, 15 inches, above the uppermost portion of the operator's seat when the seat is depressed by the weight of the operator';

"Whereas we propose the law be amended to a similar Saskatchewan law which states, 'The vehicle shall have grips that are no higher than the shoulders of the seated driver';

"Whereas amending the law will ensure the safe operation of the vehicle relating to the physical size of the operator,

"The current top four manufacturers do not manufacture some models that are in compliance with our current Ontario handlebar law."

I affix my name to this petition.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): A petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote,

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly and the Minister of Health.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I affix my signature also.

TAXATION

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition signed by 23 residents of my constituency who are very concerned about taxation policies in the province of Ontario. It's not in the official format, but I'll table it anyway.

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ALZHEIMER RESPITE CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by a number of people from the Niagara Peninsula. It reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Niagara region has one of the highest per capita populations of seniors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Niagara region ranks 32nd out of 38 health regions in long-term-care funding and that more individuals wait for support services from the March of Dimes than those who are actually served by it; and

"Whereas Alzheimer patients who critically depend on support services in order to cope in a more humane way with this devastating illness continue to suffer from unacceptable delays in receiving respite care; and

"Whereas more than half of all Ontario families waiting for Alzheimer-related respite care reside in the Niagara area;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to adopt the plan by the Niagara Regional District Health Council which would help improve the way vulnerable people are treated in the Niagara area."

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with its contents.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have been asked to present a petition to the Ontario Legislature which reads as follows:

"Whereas the public secondary school teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote,

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

I have affixed my signature to it.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Minister of Education and Training.

"Whereas the minister has gone on record stating that the government is deeply committed to an educational system that delivers excellence and the government has acknowledged that the public want a highly educated,

highly motivated and highly trained workforce that is the result of providing an absolutely first-class education to our young people and that the government is going to deliver on these needs expressed by the public; and

"Whereas Stats Canada data placed Ontario sixth in spending per pupil, after the territories, Quebec, Manitoba and BC, yet the government has announced a \$400-million cut in educational funding for the 1996 year; and

"Whereas these cuts will translate into a reduction in support to students, a reduction in teacher contact with students and create a school environment that will not promote the ideal stated above, contrary to that which the public expects;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the Minister of Education and Training to instruct the Minister of Finance to withdraw this damaging underfunding of Ontario's education system and to refrain from making changes which affect the delicate balance between teachers and school boards."

I have attached my name to the petition as well.

LEGAL AID

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I've got about 3,000 petitions here in these boxes, and they come from Windsor, Sarnia, Chatham, Brantford, Kitchener, Georgetown, Welland, Hamilton, Brampton and Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"To the Right Honourable Mike Harris, Premier of Ontario:

"Justice for all.

"I believe in justice for all, which includes competent legal advice and representation before courts and administrative tribunals. In order to maintain a functional judicial system, I call upon your government to continue current funding for legal aid certificates and independent community legal clinics."

I attach my name to these.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and, operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals; and

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on statistics of children and youth in crisis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and placed the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Chatham and Kent county, and I affix my signature to it.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from injured workers across Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to your government's proposed changes to Ontario's workers' compensation system including elimination of the bipartite board of directors; reduced temporary benefits; introduction of the three-day period from the time of injury with no pay; legislated limits on entitlement, thereby excluding repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims from eligibility for compensation; reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements.

"Workers' compensation is not a handout; it is an insurance plan for which premiums are paid; it is a legal obligation that employers have to employees who 80 years ago traded their right to sue employers in return for this insurance plan.

"Therefore, we demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent injuries, no reduction in current Workers' Compensation Board staff levels and that the bipartite board structure be left intact."

I affix my signature also.

FAMILY RESOURCES PROGRAMS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition in support of family resource programs. It's addressed to the Legislature of the province of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, are firmly opposed to the erosion of the child care system.

"We are most particularly concerned about the unregulated child care sector, which represents the choice of most Ontario families, many living in rural areas.

"We urge this government to make its budget reduction in areas where children and families will not once again be the target of cuts.

"Family resource programs support the informal sector of child care which includes parents caring for their own children and the care provided by grandparents, home child care providers and nannies."

I have affixed my signature to it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I've been asked to present a petition by residents of Tweed and Madoc. It reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations who will run them for profit; and

"Whereas after the corporate takeover it will be strictly user-pay for the services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and worker safety practices are being relaxed because corporations don't like the rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars, even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating the privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the sell-off of Ontario's public services and to reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to the petition.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects for Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce."

There are several other "whereases."

"Therefore, to ensure that this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario,

"We, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I put my signature to this petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a short petition here delivered to my office from Grace Carman Court, 180 Sheridan Avenue. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, request that the assembly of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

This is signed by 58 people and I submit my signature on this petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Chudleigh from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs presented the committee's report on pre-budget consultations 1996 and moved its adoption.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It gives me great pleasure to table in the Legislature today the standing committee on finance and economic affairs' pre-budget report. As it is the first time I have gone through this process, it confirms my opinion of the opportunities available for all citizens of Ontario to participate in the political process. I was impressed by the quality and diversity of all presentations and submissions to the committee and can confidently say that they are representative of the culture and fabric of Ontario.

To my colleagues in all three parties, I offer my appreciation for the fairness and respect afforded the Chair through the process. This process has produced a number of recommendations, 11 of which, I am pleased to add, received consensus from the committee. Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Chudleigh moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MPPs PENSION AND COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996

PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA RÉTRIBUTION ET DU RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to reform MPPs' pensions, to eliminate tax-free allowances and to adjust MPPs' compensation levels / Projet de loi 42, Loi portant réforme du régime de retraite des députés, éliminant les allocations non imposables et rajustant les niveaux de rétribution des députés.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Mr Snobelen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): The Education Amendment Act, 1996, is legislation that addresses important issues of the present, yet honours our commitment to the future.

The purpose of this bill is to help Ontario school boards get their spending under control and ensure that education dollars provide greater value in the classroom. With this bill, we are continuing to implement the savings strategy announced on March 6 of this year, a strategy

that will achieve savings of \$400 million in the 1996-97 fiscal year. This \$400 million in savings represents only 3% of the \$14 billion Ontario taxpayers spend on education each year.

Several steps have already been taken. The 1996 general legislative grant regulation, released on March 29, has encouraged school boards to reduce expenditures in the area of transportation and board administration. Through cooperation and efficiencies, boards are expected to reduce expenditures on transportation by \$16 million in 1996. Any savings in excess of these amounts will be retained by the school boards.

Boards will also be expected to find savings of \$65 million in 1996 by reducing expenditures on central administration, instructional supervision and custodial and maintenance services. Central administration expenditures include the costs of trustees, offices of directors of education, senior administration and business functions. Instructional supervision expenditures include supervisory officers, coordinators, consultants and costs of curriculum development.

We have also announced a one-year moratorium on capital projects for 1996-97 for an estimated saving of \$167 million. Only projects that have received final approval under the Ministry of Education and Training's capital grant plan and for which construction has already begun will be funded in the 1996-97 fiscal year. Projects funded through Canada-Ontario infrastructure works will also continue. In the interim, the Ministry of Education and Training will launch a review to develop recommendations on alternative financing options for new school construction.

These and other measures we are taking are necessary for a simple reason: The future of Ontario's students is at risk if we continue to spend beyond our means. The people of Ontario have always valued education. Both as individuals and as a society, they have been and continue to be prepared to back up that belief with generous contributions of their tax dollars. In the 1996-97 fiscal year alone, the Ontario taxpayer will provide an estimated \$14 billion through provincial and local taxes for elementary and secondary education.

Ontarians place a high value on education because they know it's an essential part of plans to restore jobs and prosperity to our province. Since 1990, nearly all new jobs in Ontario have gone to workers with post-secondary education and training. The emerging information-based economy will put an even greater premium on learning. In increasingly competitive world markets, high-paying, productive jobs for Ontario will be available only if people are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills.

These demands of the future will be met within a present where we face difficult fiscal realities created by a decade of overspending. Overall, Ontario spends about \$1 billion more on education than it would if its spending were in line with the averages of other provinces.

The need to maintain and improve quality education programming while bringing our spending to a more suitable level is clear. This government recognizes that if we want to provide our children and our children's children with quality and accountability in education, we must also provide affordability.

We are already planning a far-reaching reform of our secondary school system and we are establishing a program of province-wide assessment. We are moving towards a new College of Teachers to promote excellence in the teaching profession. These initiatives give us a solid platform for improving what is most important to our students—the quality of education in the classroom.

The success of these initiatives depends, in the final analysis, on the financial health of our province and our education system, on our ability to ensure that the classroom is the priority for education. To achieve an education system that delivers on both quality and affordability, we must be prepared to restructure. Over the past few months, I have met with parents, students and taxpayers as well as school board trustees, officials and teachers. Many suggestions were offered to accomplish the necessary savings in education spending.

Through this process, the government has heard three very clear messages:

First, education savings can be achieved. People recognize that education in Ontario must and can become more efficient, that Ontario should bring its education spending more into line with the spending levels of other provinces.

Second, there must be an opportunity to find these savings and develop solutions at the local level. People believe that programs and services for students can be better preserved if those responsible for delivery have a hand in the restructuring process.

Third, the urgent and recognized need to address the issue of overspending must be balanced by allowing sufficient time to ensure that quality programming for students is maintained.

The measures announced on March 6, some of which we are now enacting with this bill, show that government has heard and responded to these messages. In keeping with what the government has heard, this bill is based on three goals: first, that classroom funding should be protected; second, that opportunities should be provided for local decision-making and locally negotiated solutions; third, that local taxes should not be increased.

I would now like to review the specific measures proposed in this bill that will help the education sector achieve these goals.

It is clear that measures can be taken to achieve greater efficiency and cooperation in operational and administrative spending. Effective cooperation between boards and other public sector agencies can result in significant savings. While a number of school boards are already involved in cooperative agreements with other public sector institutions, other boards have held back because they felt they lacked clear statutory authority to enter into such agreements.

This bill addresses that concern by amending the Education Act specifically to enable boards to enter into cooperative agreements with municipalities, hospitals, universities and colleges. The effect will be to encourage the sharing of facilities, equipment, transportation and other support services. The amendment further promotes the goal of greater cooperation by giving the Lieutenant Governor in Council the authority to make regulations that will enable boards to enter into cooperative agreements with other organizations and institutions.

The bill will also require each school board to publish an annual report of the measures it has taken to reduce spending and improve efficiency through cooperation with other boards or public sector institutions. This report will also include an estimate of savings achieved through cooperative agreements, a projection of future savings and a description of further cooperative measures that are being considered by the board, as well as a description of cooperative measures that were considered but not undertaken, with a rationale for the decision not to undertake these measures.

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The bill also proposes amendments related to the education of adult pupils. These amendments permit a school board to direct certain adult pupils to take credit courses offered in the board's continuing education program instead of taking them through the regular day school program.

Adult education will continue to be important in the long-term economic health of Ontario for the foreseeable future. This change in funding will offer boards increased flexibility.

The amendments provide that some categories of adult pupils may continue to be served through the regular day school program. These are exceptional pupils who require placement in a day school program based on the recommendation of an identification, placement and review committee, and adult pupils who require a particular course of study for diploma purposes or for entry into university or a trade where the course is not available through continuing education.

Amendments proposed in the bill will end the statutory entitlement of teachers to 20 days of paid sick leave. This change will facilitate local decision-making. To give boards and teachers time to negotiate these provisions, it is proposed that these amendments become effective in September 1998. If a board and its teachers reach agreement before that time, their agreement can come into effect before September 1998.

To fulfil the commitment given in the Common Sense Revolution and the throne speech, this bill proposes amendments that will restore to school boards, as of September of this year, the right to decide whether to offer junior kindergarten.

Under the previous government, school boards were required to provide junior kindergarten. Now junior kindergarten will be a local option and the province will share the cost with local school boards that decide to offer the program.

Where a board decides to offer junior kindergarten, it will be required to make the program available to all eligible pupils in its jurisdiction. Minority language sections of boards will have the power to make a decision respecting the provision of junior kindergarten for the sections' pupils.

The legislation will enable negative grant boards to contribute their fair share to the \$400-million savings strategy. Amendments proposed in this bill provide the necessary authority for those boards to contribute on an equal basis once an agreement is reached on the payments required.

The government is committed to working with its public sector partners to ensure that the people, especially the children, of our province enjoy public services that are not only excellent, but also efficient and affordable. We want students in our schools to have the best education. We want them to be able to use that education in a prosperous future, rather than find themselves entangled in a massive public debt.

Today, with second reading of this bill, we are taking responsible action to shape an education system that is committed to excellence in student achievement and is economically sustainable.

We are demonstrating our commitment as a government to dealing with the problems of today in a way that ensures that we are protecting the future. Some of the choices are difficult, but we owe it to our children to make these choices, which have been too long postponed.

The result will be a better education system that meets the needs of the people it serves: the children in our schools and the taxpayers of Ontario.

I ask all members to support this bill and the future of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Rather than this being a good day for Ontario, it's a sad day for Ontario. When I think of William Davis when he was Minister of Education and John Robarts before him, John Robarts as Premier, when they brought out the Robarts plan and Mr Davis brought forward some innovative changes to education and provided the appropriate funding for the field of education, I think of that and the subsequent years as being good years for Ontario because at that time we were investing, I say investing, in a very important future: the future of young people and of those who were not so young but wanted to continue their education.

Today what we're seeing is the government slashing in the very place where it should be making an investment. When the minister refers to junior kindergarten and it being a choice, I notice in today's St Catharines Standard that you have board fighting board; that's essentially what it is. One board's keeping it, one board isn't, and the boards are holding out until the other board takes an initiative. Clearly junior kindergarten, to most objective observers of all political stripes now, is considered to be an essential part of our education system, not a frill as the minister suggests by his action of making it not mandatory but optional for boards and by not providing the appropriate funding for those purposes.

I see as well that 40 more school board layoffs are taking place in Lincoln county. The minister can trump up a question, as he did in the House yesterday, to try to say that the older teachers should retire, but the only way that can be done is with some financial incentives, and he's certainly not providing the funding for local boards of education to do that. There's no innovative plan to do that, and as a result, the young, fresh, vibrant teachers in the system are being fired.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Thank you for recognizing me. I recognize you too, but I didn't want to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Would the minister like two minutes to respond?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The honourable member opposite brought up two I think very good former Premiers of this province, former Premier Robarts and former Premier Davis, both of whom made a contribution to this province, both of whom ran this province and directed it into a future during a time of prosperity, during the time that I grew up in this province, when there was opportunity, when there was vitality, when there was a chance for a young person in this province to build an effective career.

If we do not take some of the steps we are taking now, the young people of Ontario don't face that opportunity that I had as a child, that I had as a young man in Ontario. They don't face that kind of vitality and opportunity. In fact, they'll graduate from programs and go looking for opportunities in New Brunswick or Alberta or Colorado or China, because there won't be jobs and an opportunity to build a career here in Ontario.

Mr Davis, when he was Minister of Education, was not looking at a \$100-billion debt that has been left to the children of this province by the previous governments. He was not looking at that circumstance. He was also not looking at a budget in Ontario where our debt interest every year is more than the province contributes to schools, colleges and universities. This bill begins the process of turning that around, of turning this province into a place of opportunity, vitality and possibility for the young people. I think it's a new beginning and a new opportunity for those young people, and I for one am proud of it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, may I seek the indulgence of the House to have unanimous agreement to allow me to share my time with my colleague from Kingston and The Islands?

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed.

Mr Patten: Thank you very much.

I'm pleased to participate in what I believe is the most significant debate affecting education in this province today. It is however somewhat ironic when I look at the length of Bill 34 and its eight pages, at a cost of \$100 million a page, because essentially this is what it means. Interestingly enough, there is little in this bill which directly impacts on how the cuts will hit education. Allow me to elaborate a little bit on that.

The government has already made its cuts, as we all know, to the elementary and secondary school system through its ministry regulations. There was no debate following last November's economic statement, when the government set out \$400 million of reductions for this school year. There was also no budget debate, because of course there was no budget; no opportunity for members of the public to come forward and to participate in the discussion when the intention of the government was to reduce the provincial dollars and the dollars which fund elementary and secondary schooling in Ontario. There was none. It was simply a statement; no participation.

On March 6, the minister outlined his so-called toolkit, which of course was not a toolkit at all because it wasn't

able to fix anything. It was really a money grab, and that's what this bill outlines as well. Of course, that was part of a strategy that he had developed.

Then on March 12, the minister sent out to school boards the key components of the general legislative grant for 1996 and 1997. Then on March 29, he sent out the actual regulations so school boards could calculate for themselves how badly they were getting hit by the cuts.

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This is what this debate is really about—what is outlined in this document, Key Components of the 1996 General Legislative Grants, the document that was sent out to the various school boards. It's about the abandoning of junior kindergarten. It's about abandoning those people in our society who choose to return to finish their high school education. It's about abandoning the responsibility to provide for facilities for students at this time. It's about offloading a larger proportion of the educational dollar on to the local property taxpayer. It's about less money for the education of students. It's about a government that is more interested in delivering a tax rebate instead of delivering a quality and accessible education system.

I want to be fair and I would not be if I didn't allow that there had been a considerable amount of discussion around cuts to education. However, the discussion has not been about how we can improve the quality of education in Ontario, how we can best help students to acquire the skills and the learning to succeed in a new and rapidly expanding global economy; the debate has been about how disastrous these cuts will be on classrooms in this province, classrooms which the Conservatives promised to protect. It is written in the Common Sense Revolution. "Classrooms are feeling the impacts of cuts" was their statement for launching their particular policies as to what they would do in education.

On Saturday, January 13, more than 35,000 teachers from across this province came to the front lawn of the Legislature to carry the message that cuts hurt kids—over 30,000 teachers on their own time. It was a powerful display of commitment and of concern. Unfortunately, the government dismissed the rally as nothing more than an interest group. Isn't that strange, that teachers would take an interest in their own profession and take an interest in education? But parents and students from across this province have joined with teachers to say that the cuts you are implementing go too far, too fast and too deep.

An Environics poll done between December 27 and January 3 provided the following snapshot of people's thoughts on the state of education in Ontario, and I'd like to share some of these: 88% of Ontarians said they are concerned about the future quality of Ontario's educational system; 66% say they are very concerned; 55% of Ontarians think cuts in the area of education are going too far; only 8% say they do not go far enough; 58% say they are concerned about the impact of the government's decision to change the way kindergarten is funded.

What did they say about the 30% tax rebate? Eighty-eight per cent of Ontarians say they are willing to forgo individual tax savings in order to provide special support for students at risk; 73% would be willing to forgo a personal tax saving to provide adult education classes for

those who wish to get off welfare by completing their high school and enabling themselves to find a job or go on to higher education; 65% said they would be willing to forgo the tax saving in order to reduce class sizes; 57% would be willing to forgo the tax saving to provide junior kindergarten classes.

These are very powerful statements. It's really no surprise, because we know that Ontarians are very concerned about education. If I had to tell you which issue was number one in terms of the frequency of calls in my riding, or the frequency of letters or petitions, I would tell you that it would be related to education, and within education junior kindergarten, without question, is the number one issue that is identified by Ontarians and what concerns them most.

Ontarians also want to see change. There's no debate about that. However, they want changes that improve the quality and standards of education. They want educational reform, not reforms driven by simply the bottom line. The legislation before us today is about something bigger than the legislative changes contained within the pages of this particular bill. The heart of the debate we are beginning to engage in is about the wholesale change this government has been imposing on the educational system over the past nine months. This bill covers junior kindergarten, adult education, teachers' sick leave benefits, cooperative agreements and so-called equalization payments.

But these are window dressing for the actual changes that are occurring in Ontario. Over the last nine months, the Minister of Education has engaged in a communications exercise that can only be described in the following manner: If you say it long enough and if you say it often enough, people will begin to believe you. The problem is, it seems the minister is beginning to believe in what he is saying himself. According to the Minister of Education, spending in Ontario is the second-highest in Canada. He says we spend 10% per pupil more than the average of other provinces and that this amounts to \$1.3 billion in excess spending.

Unfortunately for the minister, this is not reality, it is a myth, for according to Statistics Canada and their data, this is the reality: number one, that Ontario's per-pupil expenditure indeed is sixth in Canada, following the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, Quebec, BC and Manitoba, and that Ontario's average expenditure is \$6,961, 2.4% above the Canadian average of \$6,796. Let me repeat that: Ontario's educational expenditure is 2.4% above the Canadian average, not 10%, as the minister is so apt to state.

It seems that to make his case, the minister was comparing apples to oranges but saying he was comparing oranges to oranges, which the data from Statistics Canada will show is not correct. The data the minister was using included in Ontario's figures spending for federal and private schools, it included kindergarten expenditures, which were not counted in the enrolment, some 100,000 students, thus inflating the per-pupil cost calculation. It seems that the minister's comparative analysis needs some work.

The member for Algoma will recall in estimates that when we asked that of the deputy minister, the deputy

minister agreed and said yes, further work would have to be done on the basis on which comparative calculations were being made and that he would get back to us. We're still waiting.

As I said to him at the time of estimates and I have stated in this chamber, we should be establishing a quality and a standard of education in Ontario which meets the specific and diverse needs of the people of Ontario. Why is he using the average of the other Canadian provinces as a benchmark for the standards of education in Ontario? Ontario has the highest per-capita income in Canada, Ontario has the largest multicultural population, requiring special language and other educational supports, and Ontario also has four constitutionally guaranteed public school systems: the public, the Catholic separate, the French and the Protestant separate. Ontario is simply not like the other provinces. Surely, the Minister of Education would want to lead an educational system that is the best, not simply on par with the happy medium.

Unfortunately, the education system is on a course headed in the other direction. The \$400-million cuts to education, drastic and deep cuts, are taking money, dollars which would otherwise educate our students, right out of the educational system to fund a 30% tax rebate. That's what this is really all about. That's what really is at stake. The reforms to the education system have been driven by the supreme value of this government, called economics.

What about the tax rebate? Who will benefit? According to Revenue Canada, this is who will benefit: Ontarians earning \$100,000 or more will receive more than \$1.3 billion in tax rebates; Ontarians earning \$250,000 or more will receive more than \$446 million in tax rebates from the Harris government. That's very interesting, because funding for elementary and secondary students' schooling is being cut by \$400 million at this time alone, and the Minister of Education and Training continues to boast he can find \$1.3 billion in cuts within the educational sector. I find these similarities quite frightening.

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Who doesn't benefit?

Let's start at the beginning: children who otherwise would have been entering junior kindergarten in September 1996. These children are not benefiting now, nor will they ever benefit. They may benefit later—who knows?—but when they find themselves in an overcrowded classroom where the teacher is unable, no matter how dedicated, to provide essential individual attention with one-on-one contact, they will of course suffer.

In the case of adult students, they are not benefiting for two reasons, first, because program funding for their needs has been cut—simple, straightforward. Second, they most likely receive a low income, the reason they are returning to finish their high school diploma, and therefore get little or no tax rebate.

Teachers who are laid off due to the severe cutbacks that are ongoing as we speak today are not benefiting, because they will not be paying any income tax, if they're unemployed, to be taxed in the first place.

How about the construction trades which would otherwise be building new schools across the province to

meet increased enrolment and overcrowding? With the capital freeze, there will be no work for many of them.

How about the property taxpayers in Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa who, due to the Minister of Education's cuts and this bill—it's in this particular bill—will be paying for a tax cut a second time when the Minister of Education comes looking for what he calls an equalization payment to the Minister of Finance from their local educational property taxes?

The fact of the matter is that there is no silver lining attached to these education cuts. They signal storm clouds, in my opinion, for education in Ontario. As I have said, this bill in many ways is inconsequential. The real heart of the debate lies outside, in what has already gone through in regulation. This is where I'd like to turn my attention for a moment.

The 1996 general legislative grant sets out, on top of making social contract reductions permanent, reductions in operating expenses of \$231 million in calendar year 1996 and a freeze on capital funding which will net the province \$167 million. It will also cost schools an amount yet to be determined due to incidental and operating costs resulting in other internal cuts.

Legislative grants identify changes in the following major areas: funding changes to junior kindergarten; funding changes for adult education; reductions in the grant for busing; reductions in administration, custodial and maintenance services; a reduction in the per-pupil grant ceiling; an increase in the standard mill rate, the minimum tax effort local property taxpayers must contribute to education.

Let me talk for a moment about the very important area of junior kindergarten and what this might mean. The provision in this legislation to revert junior kindergarten to a local option in and of itself is fairly tame, because prior to the changes in Bill 4 under the New Democratic Party, junior kindergarten was a local option. However, it was fully funded through the per-pupil grant. In 1989, the former Liberal government announced its intention to introduce junior kindergarten throughout the province. It was still listed as a local option until the NDP's Bill 4 mandated it to a phase-in period. We still have not reached that end of the phase-in period, with 30 boards or thereabouts still without junior kindergarten programs.

When the present government made its changes, these changes went beyond restoring it to a local option. It is the funding formula, which was reversed, that has the greatest impact. I would say to my honourable friends across the way that you could keep your promise to restore junior kindergarten to a local option without affecting the level of provincial funding availability.

During a visit to London last year, the minister said junior kindergarten might be restored as a mandatory and full-funded program following a review of early childhood education in Ontario. The minister said, to quote from a London Free Press article of January 19: "At the end of the review, if we come to the conclusion that the system in place last year or this year was the right system, we will put it back in place. That includes funding and mandatory status and the rest of it. That is not off the table."

We will be waiting with bated breath to hear the minister's learnings from that particular review, and the opposition parties would of course be happy to share much information that would lead him to arrive at the conclusion that the reinstitution of junior kindergarten is absolutely essential to our educational system.

I suggest that if the government is serious about junior kindergarten, it should exercise a more thoughtful approach to its decision. If they want to review the effectiveness of junior kindergarten or explore alternative methods to address the needs of early childhood education, then do this: Let's have a review, but in the interim, leave the program and its funding as is until such time as we have fully considered the decision.

To address the issue of making the program a local option in the interim, the government simply needs to extend the phase-in period for junior kindergarten beyond 1997. This will ensure that boards that do not wish to provide junior kindergarten at this time will not have to. However, those that wish to keep junior kindergarten will be able to do so with adequate funding, pending the review.

I don't mean to exercise the point, but it is an important one to make, that changes in funding to junior kindergarten may defeat the purpose of having a review; that by changing the funding, the minister has made this program unaffordable for many, if not most, school boards. As a result, coupled with the other funding cuts in educational boards, boards will be forced to cancel their junior kindergarten programs, as we have already seen, not because they don't see it as having value but because the program is not adequately funded.

Currently, as a mandatory program, junior kindergarten is funded as part of the per-pupil calculation under category 1 of the general legislative grant. It receives full provincial recognition and is eligible for full provincial grant funding. Under this government, the funding structure for the program has been moved to the program-specific funding calculation under category 3. This means it no longer receives full provincial recognition and is only funded by the province based on the rate of grant. This means if the provincial share of the local educational dollar is 40%, let us say, the province will now only cover 40% of the cost of junior kindergarten programs.

Here's an actual example, the Sault Ste Marie Board of Education, and this was reported in the Sault Star on January 31: "Presently, the local board pays only \$47,000 to fund its junior kindergarten program. The remaining \$1.3 million comes from the province. Under the government's proposed changes to funding, if the board maintains the same level of service, it will cost local taxpayers \$627,000 to fund the same program next year, and the provincial share would be reduced from \$1.3 million to \$735,000."

I realize this sounds incredible, to go from a share of \$47,000 to \$627,000, but that is what is happening throughout the province. That's what the funding change means, and many boards, particularly those which rely heavily on grants from the province, simply will not be able to afford the cost of this program on their own, so they may very well have to cancel the program.

Here's a further example of the point I'm making. Brant county public trustees had to make a decision on junior kindergarten, a decision which one trustee described as "the worst decision I've ever had to make." This is in the January 19 Brantford Expositor. The decision was to cancel junior kindergarten.

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Mr Wildman: Did he say suppository?

Mr Patten: No, I didn't say that.

The decision was to cancel junior kindergarten "even though most trustees, including former opponents of the program, believe it is valuable." So why did they cancel it? Because they had to, not because they wanted to. "Trustees were told the amount of money the boards receive from their provincial government to pay for JK will drop to about \$832,000 in 1996 from almost \$1.5 million in 1995."

Cancelling the program results in changes in the school and throughout boards from teaching staff requirements, supplies, busing etc. It disrupts the base that has already been built. To cancel the program and then a year or two later say, "We were perhaps wrong; it has proven, by virtue of our review, to be beneficial; we will provide for it again," really doesn't make a lot of sense. Certainly that doesn't make a lot of common sense.

For my part, I believe that we should be providing junior kindergarten because it makes good sense. It's a wise investment. We talk about children being our most important resource and we need to act on that basis.

As a member of the former government that brought in junior kindergarten, I believe the information is there, and the experience which boards and parents have had over the last seven years in Ontario tells us that. Last year alone over 100,000 children in Ontario were registered in junior kindergarten. Numerous reports and studies support early childhood education as a head start for children. JK has been very valuable in creating a level playing field for young children.

During the debate on Bill 30, I referred to a presentation that was sent to me by a Mrs Carolyn Morrow. It is a presentation she made to her local school board, the West Parry Sound Board of Education, about the value of junior kindergarten. I want to share a portion of it with you in which she outlines the benefits her daughter received from junior kindergarten. I quote:

"We live in a rural setting and, as a result, my children experience some measure of isolation. Her year in junior kindergarten last year provided Katie with an early opportunity to learn what it is to be a member of a community. She broadened her circle of friends. Not normally a 'joiner' and often reserved and retiring, her self-confidence grew as a result of her participation in group activities independent of me. It introduced new authority figures in her life.

"She embarked on an unpressured course designed to give her a strong start in basic literacy. Perhaps most important, she had a pleasant introduction to education in a formal setting where she had fun exploring and learning in a play-based program."

She goes on:

"I am an educated person. I completed high school and pursued post-secondary education at Queen's University.

However, I do not have the knowledge and the skills to teach my daughter what Elizabeth West"—her teacher—"taught my daughter last year."

This is a concrete example of the human benefits of junior kindergarten. It has a socialization and an educational impact of high value for children.

The Royal Commission on Learning offered these observations on junior kindergarten, and I quote:

"We have known for some time that, by the time children begin grade 1, variations on oral language, vocabulary and comprehension are so great that it is difficult for teachers to narrow the differences between children who are more or less ready to learn in a formal setting." A very powerful statement.

It further states:

"It is clear that, by age four, the failure of a great number of our children to acquire knowledge and understanding will have serious consequences for their formal education."

It also plays a key role in early detection and intervention of developmental problems that youngsters might have.

Additional reports and studies such as the Perry Preschool Project; Better Beginnings, Better Futures; Children First, To Herald a Child, to cite only a few—there are many, many more and they all come to similar conclusions: Whatever we can do with young people, both preschool and in the early years of school, can have a decided impact on their ability to learn.

I cannot make this point any stronger: Returning junior kindergarten to a local option, which is what we have outlined here in Bill 34, does not have a significant impact on the program, but the funding changes the government enacts through this regulation are the key. You can have your provision in Bill 34 simply reversing the funding change. In the meantime, you can institute a review and explore whether there are other models that can deliver an improved product in the interests of early childhood education.

I would like now to talk a little bit about another area I believe is a short-sighted measure that will have a tragic impact on Ontario, and that is the funding for adult education. Educational opportunities for people who wish to return to high school to earn their diploma must be available. Individuals may have dropped out of school for one reason or another, yet they make the conscious decision, in some cases a courageous decision, to return so that they may improve their chances in the workplace.

You may recall that last week I delivered to the Minister of Education several hundred letters from adult students in the Ottawa area who are concerned about how the funding cuts will affect their chance to finish their high school diploma. I read into the record excerpts from a couple of the letters from single mothers who were completing their high school education in order to get off social assistance and to improve their chances for employment and a better standard of living for their children. There were also letters from individuals who were working in low-paying jobs who wanted to complete their high school education in order to move up in their employment or to pursue newer opportunities.

In cases such as these, the individuals often don't have the resources to pursue the educational opportunities on their own. By reducing the funding for adult education and pushing it into continuing education, it changes the financial base of this program and it then becomes a barrier for those who need this program the most and those who perhaps are unable to pay.

The rationale for this move, according to the deputy minister during estimates—and the minister today in the House in his opening remarks reiterated this—was “to provide school boards with some flexibility as to how they wish to provide this service.” But I think the change benefits the government's anxiety over finding money much more than it ends up helping out the system. The adult students, on the other hand, end up out in the cold. Who benefits?

I often wonder if there have been any studies done by the ministry in terms of what more effective methods are out there. I've looked very carefully at the results of those who attend the adult schools. I have visited schools personally. I see the enthusiasm, the commitment, the motivation of these adults who are going back to complete their high school diploma. It's heart-warming to see. There is a success rate of something in the range of 47% by these adult schools, and our understanding is that probably 50% of them will be in danger of existence, of survival.

I wonder what we have in place, because obviously if many of these young adults are unable to complete their high school diploma, then the chances of them remaining on social assistance or welfare increases that much more. Where are the savings? You may save a few bucks out of the educational portfolio, but surely people will acknowledge and members will acknowledge that we will be adding costs to community and social services.

Instead of providing the boards with the full pupil grant for a student over the age of 21, the boards will only receive, with this legislation, the continuing education amount of about \$2,200. Through this bill, the board then has the flexibility to move that student from the day program and direct them to a continuing education program. There's no flexibility at all; they will have to do this.

There is a clear distinction between continuing education and an adult student in a secondary school day program. Continuing education is provided on a course-by-course basis and has a totally different mandate. In this instance, we are looking at individuals who may already have earned their high school diplomas, maybe did the bare minimum in terms of course load and wanted to get on with it, and now they want to upgrade or take a specific course to improve their skills or their skill set or to fulfil prerequisites for further educational opportunities such as college or a certificate. There are also the interest classes through continuing education, but I'm not referring to any of these.

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In the former case, individuals need only to take a course or two and then off they go. In the case of individuals who wish to return and finish their diploma, the needs are quite different and are not easily met in the continuing education model. In fact, they require a more

formal program, with an average duration of nine months, which is approximately the same as a normal school year.

They are more likely individuals in their early 20s, possibly some in their 30s, but we're not referring to 65- or 70-year-olds here; we're referring to young adults who still have a lot of time to pursue productive lives. For such individuals, the self-esteem they garner by actually being able to go back to school plays an important role in motivating them and securing their future success. If the individual is on welfare or another form of social assistance, it may indeed be the turning point for him.

The question is, what is being accomplished here? Are we attempting to make individuals pay for having dropped out of school and wanting to come back and make students pay for taking more courses than are required as a form of free upgrading? If that's the goal, then this is not the manner in which we can do it; that can be dealt with quite easily. You cannot simply lump all the adult students into the same category, as is being done through the funding changes to continuing education and which is what Bill 34 will allow.

During estimates, the minister alluded to the fact that adults have a different cost base in education than do adolescents. He cited class sizes and supervision as some of the factors which impacted on the cost base. I did not receive a description of the difference. Of course, there are some differences; we have to acknowledge that. There are still some basic requirements in terms of facilities, supplies and equipment that must also be met. We have to factor into our own calculations these costs which have to be assumed by the board. You cannot treat adult education in isolation of these considerations.

I'm particularly concerned that many boards and individuals have expressed concern over the decline in the grant for educating these individuals. I believe that the government is once again moving before it actually knows the full impact of what may happen and what will replace it. For this reason, I suspect that this move is simply a cost-cutting measure. It has little or no semblance of educational needs; it is more, “These people are abusing the system and it's time we got tough,” or “Here's a window of opportunity to grab back some money.” Again I ask the government to step back a little and actually look at the impact of what this legislation will do.

The legislation also addresses negative grant boards and what this legislation will do to them. The negative grant boards are those which do not receive transfer payments from the province due to sufficient property, commercial and industrial tax revenues. They are being expected by the Minister of Education and Training to make what he calls equalization payments. These payments will return to the province to share in reduced provincial education funding. The rationale behind this is that it is unfair for boards that rely on provincial grants to bear the full brunt of the cuts. I, for one, feel that all these cuts are unfair. We should not be facing all these cuts, because we know they're not being redistributed back into the educational sector; they're being pulled right out in order to fund a tax rebate.

That being said, we are. I have reservations about the province coming in and raiding the local property tax

base. That's what is at play here. It's a form of indirect taxation. In fact, it's taxation without representation.

The NDP government attempted something similar under the social contract by negotiating with the boards and of course there was limited success on that. The Minister of Education, in response to questions from my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt and our friend across the way from Etobicoke West, argues that the provision in Bill 34 is not a clawback, that it is only an enabling provision which will allow school boards to make an equalization payment to the province.

The question I have—and it's similar to what the member for Etobicoke West posed, which was an excellent question—is: If the school boards do not want to make up this payment, what is your next step? What are you going to hang over their heads this time? It is written clearly in Bill 34 that it is the Minister of Education who will determine the amount of the payment and that it is made payable to the Minister of Finance. In fact, it's here in section 9 of the legislation. The so-called equalization payments will be used to pay for what? Something in education? No. This is the tax base. That tax base is for educational purposes. It's going to be used to pay the 30% tax rebate, that's what it's going to be used for. There is no guarantee that they will be used to offset any reductions in the educational transfer because they will go to consolidated revenue. That is clear.

This is of such concern it's even broader than education, and I'm sure my colleagues on all sides of the House will know this and I'm sure representations have been made. The regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton passed a resolution imploring us to please not enter into taking this money away, which is dedicated tax money at the local level for education.

I, as I'm sure others have, sought legal advice to see whether in fact the province has the ability to make this kind of a tax grab. I am told that they do not, but that this will send a message to school boards to push them and threaten them and menace them to come across with some money. But I believe that this will be a very slippery slope and I believe that this will not be easily achieved.

The boards are conscious of how the cuts are hitting assessment-poor boards. However, they do not support giving local property tax dollars, raised for educational purposes, to the provincial treasury. As I have said, I question this also. I question it because it sets a very dangerous precedent for the province, going after property tax dollars. Today it's education, tomorrow it's the municipalities, for other purposes—powers it does not currently have, nor should it have, and I'll be looking for some answers on this when we get to committee.

I'd like to say a few words about the capital freeze and the implications. While the legislation doesn't address this directly, it has a direct impact. Included in the funding reductions for 1996-97 is a freeze on capital funding. This is estimated to be a savings in the order of \$167 million. Again, this is not listed in Bill 34, except maybe it could be tied to the cooperative agreement provisions, but for all intents and purposes, it stands on its own.

The rationale for this freeze is to allow the province time to review its process and methods of meeting the capital needs of the educational system in order to spend limited dollars wisely. Ultimately, the minister has been quoted as saying that the province should move out of the capital construction area.

The minister has mused about looking at various funding options. I have a quote from the Ottawa Citizen, December 26, from a series that the Citizen did, called "The Learning Curve: Canada's Schools Adapt to New Realities," and it reads:

"In the future, new schools may be built, owned and maintained by a developer and leased by the school board. That would get growing communities through their heavy population bulge, then allow a second use for the building, says Ontario Education Minister John Snobelen."

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The fact of the matter is that the government wants to review the way in which we meet our educational accommodation needs, and that's laudable. Everyone would agree with that. However, the freeze has a negative impact through its application. There are in many areas of this province serious overcrowding problems that must be addressed. These are high-growth areas of the province. In fact, many of the problems were being addressed prior to the decision that was made, but the freeze on capital has thrown a wrench into the system.

I know that the minister is personally aware of this issue, as his area is impacted significantly. Both the Dufferin-Peel separate school board and the Peel Board of Education are now sitting on numerous capital projects due to the freeze. This is the same in other high-growth areas across the province: in areas such as Windsor, Durham, York and in the Ottawa area.

Here is a sampling of what is happening in the Ottawa area with the Carleton Board of Education. Again, from the Ottawa Citizen, March 6:

"The Nepean area of Barrhaven will have to wait for two high schools that have been slated to open in September 1997. Both the public and the separate boards have planned to build high schools in the fast-growing south end.

"This is devastating," says parent Cathy Urban, who has been fighting for a Catholic high school in Barrhaven for eight years. "If I had known it would take so long to build a high school in Barrhaven, I would never have moved here."

What I have been going over highlights a number of issues surrounding the capital freeze: high-growth areas are disproportionately impacted; added costs for temporary accommodations and for busing; Peel came up with a solution to deal with local accommodation problems, but apparently that was rejected.

The timing of the freeze is unclear. Is it, indeed, for one year? Will the money be flowed back into the system as the need for new schools will still be there even more so a year from now?

Of course, there are broader issues beyond education: job losses in the construction industry due to removing \$167 million worth of projects or putting them on hold; the impact on the housing market in areas without

schools; and of course the changes to Bill 20 which remove the requirements for subdivisions to have sites set aside will have an impact.

So we're not simply dealing with an issue of waiting for the freeze to be lifted. There are overcrowding considerations. Boards have made plans to have new schools in place next September. They have made arrangements to move portables around to deal with emerging overcrowded needs which cannot be met with immediate capital projects. They have also made arrangements for busing requirements or are incurring added busing costs due to the lack of a school in proximity to a student's home.

All these considerations cost the boards money, in addition to costs already incurred for architectural and planning designs.

The Premier, oddly enough, acknowledged the freeze on school construction as unfair to high-growth communities, and what was his response? He said, "Well, the status quo is unfair." That was a very helpful comment.

The purpose of the capital freeze, though, is to realize savings on provincial education expenditures. However, it's having a negative impact by heaping added costs on school boards. As I said, I know the minister is personally aware of this situation, for he has this problem in his particular area. However, I've not seen any remedy or easing of the pressure.

In order to account for all this money that is going to be saved by making these cuts to education, the government is amending the per-pupil grants. This is essentially the basis on which the province determines the provincial grant needs of school boards.

According to the GLG regulations for 1996 and 1997, the cuts to education this year will be accomplished "through a grant ceiling reduction and standard mill rate increases. The relative weighting of the grant reductions will be as follows:"—this is from a document that was sent to all directors of education called Key Components of the 1996 General Legislative Grants—"80% of the reductions in the basic per-pupil grant to be achieved through a decrease in grant ceilings; 20% of the reductions in the basic per-pupil grant to be achieved through an increase in the standard mill rate." These combined measures result in a net shift of education costs away from the provincial government and on to the local tax base.

I'd like to use an example. School board A has 2,000 elementary students and an assessment base of, let's say, \$1 billion. If we use last year's per-pupil ceiling and standard mill rate, they would have recognized expenditures of \$8.368 million. The school board would be responsible for \$5.865 million of these expenses through local property taxes and the province would grant this board \$2.503 million.

Let's look at what's happened this year using the same data—the same school board, 2,000 elementary students, an assessment base of \$1 billion—and apply the decreased ceiling and the increased mill rate. What do we get? The first expenditure drops to \$8.056 million. Second, the school board is now responsible for \$6.24 million of the expense through local property taxes, and the provincial grant drops to \$1.816 million. Last year the

education dollar was funding 70% by the local property tax base versus 30% for the province; this year the local property tax base moves up to 77% versus 33% from the province.

Oddly enough, right here on page 16 of New Directions, Volume Two, A Blueprint for Learning in Ontario, it says, "The province should certainly be paying a larger share of education costs." Also on the same page it makes a statement, "The province has been forcing school boards to either cut services or raise local taxes." It seems to me the government is arguing that forcing boards to cut services or raise local taxes is somehow a good thing, because this is exactly what they are doing.

Boards have been handed \$400 million in cuts while at the same time the government is telling school boards that local property taxes should not—they didn't say "will not"—be increased, so I guess you could say that they are forcing school boards to cut services.

Let's look at these cuts to services. Included in the reduction in the per-pupil grant, by 1997 boards will have been expected to find \$163 million in savings in areas outside of the classroom. The areas are identified as expenditures on administration, custodial and maintenance. Grants for busing are also being cut. The provincial government intends to move towards block funding and as the first step they have cut funding for transportation grants by 10%. They expect boards to save money through cooperative measures. This reduction is expected to net the province \$16 million in 1996. Of course, when we annualize that, it becomes \$39 million in 1997.

Future block grants for transportation will be provided to boards based on the average transportation grant over the previous four years. This brings us to the big picture. Unfortunately, if you are a board like the East Parry Sound Board of Education, you have already cut to the bone in terms of transportation. The only area left to cut into is teaching itself. This is exactly what school boards have been preparing for. We've seen this reported in the paper. The system is going to suffer and the quality of education in Ontario will decline.

1630

We've already seen across Ontario layoff notices going out to teachers and to school board staff. We all know that notices are not unusual at this time of the year, around budget time. However, the magnitude and the level of notices this year is sending shock waves throughout the educational system.

Even students have taken to voicing their concerns about the cuts to education. There was a sit-in earlier this year in Oakville, and last week there was a sit-in of students taking an interest in their own educational system because they can see how they will be impacted. They had a sit-in to try to say: "We are the ones who are being impacted. We are the ones who will have a less quality education." If anything, students and parents are becoming more involved and aware of the educational system, and they have been voicing their concerns over the disastrous implications of the cuts to education.

I'll wrap up my remarks here. This debate is of significant importance because it sets the tone and direction of the Conservative educational agenda. There is concern right across the province about the direction in

which this government is moving, concern that has arisen due to announced cuts but delays in providing information about how they will have an impact. Add to this a mix of a series of leaked documents, which time has proven to be quite accurate, and you have a crisis of confidence in the future of Ontario's educational system. I am strongly recommending that this legislation, Bill 34, be referred to committee for public hearings in all parts of the province. People from Ottawa, from Kenora, from Windsor to Hearst want to be heard, want to be part of this significant educational debate. I look forward to seeing this happening.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): The first thing I would like to do is congratulate my colleague from Ottawa Centre for an excellent presentation with respect to this particular matter that's before us today. He's very knowledgeable in the area of education and certainly spent a fair amount of time in studying these issues, and he certainly put the matter in perspective as to what we're really dealing with.

The first thing I would like to pick up on is the last point he raised that deals with the whole notion of public meetings on this issue. I think it's rather interesting that on Bill 30 and Bill 31, which are certainly controversial to some extent in some quarters but certainly in the totality of—

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt my friend from Kingston and The Islands, but I was wondering if there was a quorum present.

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you please resume.

Mr Gerretsen: I would certainly like to thank the leader of the third party for giving me an opportunity to regroup, as it were, and get into this.

Public meetings: I think if there's one thing that works well in our democratic system, it's the notion of having public meetings where the public can have an opportunity to express their views on a particular bill. Usually, we of course want some of these public meetings to take place not only here in Toronto but also elsewhere in Ontario so that the public, and particularly those who are primarily interested in an educational bill like this, such as the teachers, the boards of education and the parents, can have an input into the rather significant changes that are being contemplated here.

What I find very interesting is that the government has agreed to public hearings on Bills 30 and 31. Somehow, and we heard it today in question period, there seems to be a great reluctance by the minister and by the government to allow public hearings to take place on this particular bill, a bill that has a much greater magnitude when it deals with the educational system than the other two bills have, in my opinion. I suggest that a government that prides itself on openness and honesty is sadly lacking in this respect. If you really believe in those principles, why do you not allow for public hearings in this particular matter?

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Hey, is he in order?

Mr Gerretsen: I notice that the member from Etobicoke is taking a great interest in this, and that leads me to my next point, the point of these negative-grant boards. The public of Ontario should perhaps get an indication outside of the Toronto and Ottawa areas as to really what we're talking about here. We're talking about those boards of education that don't receive any transfer payments from the province due to the fact that they have sufficient property, commercial and industrial tax revenues. They will be expected, under this new act, to make payments back to the province.

What's very interesting is that if you look at the wording of section 257.2, which deals with these granting-back payments by the boards to the province—and the member from Etobicoke put his finger right on it yesterday in his question to the minister. It was great for him to ask that question, especially since it seemed to me that it came totally unprepared, or certainly the minister didn't know what was going on. It was a well-thought-out question, and that's why we wanted him to ask more questions today on their side, so that even for those Conservative supporters out there in this province, they can actually have some questions from some of the backbenchers that haven't been prestaged and what have you, where the ministers actually have to make the same kind of responses or non-responses as they do to the opposition on a daily basis.

What the minister is quoted as saying in the Toronto Sun, a well-known Reform or Conservative paper, in the April 10 issue, is the following: "There has been some advice to our ministry that legally there needs to be a change in the Education Act so that boards can in fact share with the province." Isn't it wonderful for the boards to share with the province.

When we look at the section in the act, what does it actually state? It states as follows: "A board may make an equalization payment to the Minister of Finance in respect of a year in an amount that does not exceed the lesser of," and then it goes through a couple of ramifications. But basically if they have too much money, according to their format, they may make a payment to the Minister of Finance.

I would suggest to a government that is interested in openness and honesty that it change that section and clearly state the following: "The Minister of Finance will take an equalization payment from a board in respect of a year in an amount that does not exceed the lesser of...." At least that would be open and honest. That would tell the people of Ontario that for those two boards in Toronto and Ottawa that don't get any payments from us because of their higher assessments etc, we will take money from them.

This is just pure hypocrisy, in my submission, to make it sound as if the boards are the people who at their behest are making the payments to the Minister of Finance, when we all know that really what's happening here is the minister is saying: "You're collecting too many tax dollars in education. We want some of that money." Have at least the decency and honesty in the legislation to clearly reflect what's actually happening. I don't expect this from a government that prides itself on openness and honesty.

Tell the people exactly what you're doing and do not make it sound as if these boards of education are just out there saying: "Province, how can we possibly help you out? You need that extra \$70 million. We know we're getting too much money. Please give us legislation that allows us to do that." That is not what's happening. That is certainly something that I cannot in any way concur with, because it's misleading the people of Ontario. That was the other point. We want public meetings and we certainly want the government to be open and honest about its intent here. It wants money back from the boards of education that it basically feels get too much money to start off with.

Of course, we all know that what's really driving this is the tax cut. I'm sure you get sick and tired of hearing about it. I'm sure that some of the people who watch this regularly get sick and tired of hearing about it. But I don't think it can be stated often enough that over the next five years, according to the government's own financial statement that was filed with this House back on November 29, the public debt of the province of Ontario is going to go from about \$95 billion to over \$120 billion.

If the government would just say, "Look, our top priority is deficit cutting and we will not give anybody a tax cut until such time as we've reduced the deficit to zero," then at least people could understand their motivation and could say, "Yes, that's the right thing to do." But the \$25 billion in increased public debt we're going to get in this province over the next four to five years just happens to equate the amount of the tax cut that's being proposed. Of course, it's a tax cut, as has been stated on a number of occasions, that is basically going to benefit those people who are making over \$75,000, and I believe over 51% of the total amount of money is going to go to them.

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I've heard a very interesting statement; it was last night on a Rogers cablecast production here in Toronto, where the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training keeps making the statement, and he kept making it during the Bill 26 debate as well, that did we not realize the vast majority of six people in Ontario, I think he said something like 58%, make \$50,000 or less and therefore they are going to get a tax break.

Well, I suggest he could also say that, I don't know, 99.9% of the people make less than \$150,000 and therefore all these people are getting a tax break.

It's the kind of argument that makes absolutely no sense at all. You've got to stick to the facts, and the facts are that people who are earning \$35,000 or less are only getting 7% of the total money that will be available for the tax cut, and people who are making \$75,000 or more will be getting 51% of the total amount of money that is going to be available for the tax cut.

Mr Wildman: The Tories think that's fair.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, it's not fair in my book, and I'll tell you, most of the people I've spoken to over the last six months, irrespective of political party or persuasion—and let's face it, most people in the province do not belong to any political party at all—don't think it's fair either.

That's what this is all about. It's a \$400-million cut that simply isn't necessary. Is restructuring necessary for our system? Yes. Is it necessary to this extent, with this kind of monetary cut? I say no. And if the tax cut were taken out of the equation, this kind of cut could have been done on a much more reasonable basis with a much lesser amount of money.

The other one, in talking about openness and honesty, deals with this whole junior kindergarten issue. We've heard the member for Ottawa Centre give a very eloquent defence of junior kindergarten, about how many children are involved—I believe he mentioned over 100,000 children—how for many of these children it really is a head start into the education system and programs. Certainly children who have gone through junior kindergarten are much further advanced as a whole than those who start school fresh at the kindergarten or grade 1 level.

We haven't heard anything yet; we haven't really discussed the whole notion of the child care costs that will be involved. I know we should not regard junior kindergarten as child care, but at the same time, having junior kindergarten there, obviously the child care costs of a family with a child in junior kindergarten will be a lot less than without the program being there.

The government makes it sound as if it's a local option. "Let's leave it to the local boards of education whether they want to have a junior kindergarten program." If you just say that, I suppose it sounds like a reasonable thing, until you realize the kind of funding required to operate most of the school programs in our entire school system. You then quickly realize that if you leave junior kindergarten as a totally local option without providing any kind of funding for the program at all, the boards of education simply will not have the opportunity, will not have the financial capability, to keep the junior kindergarten program, unless you want to see a tremendous increase in property taxes, which most boards of education and certainly most taxpayers in the province would not concur with.

It is a choice in optics only. It looks as if there's a choice for the boards of education, when in fact there's no choice at all. If the funding is cut off, in effect most of the boards of education will have no choice but to eliminate the program.

The other area that's very interesting is the whole notion of adult education. I was struck, while the member for Ottawa Centre was speaking, that here we have a government very much involved in the notion that as long as everybody has a job, a lot of the economic problems we face in this province will disappear. I think most people would agree with that.

The problem of course is that with the tremendous changes in technology, with the tremendous changes in our workforce, with the tremendous changes in our methods of production within the industrial fields, a lot of the jobs that used to be available, for which people needed little or no education, are largely disappearing in this province. It seems to me that the one area in which the adult education program was quite successful was to give a second chance to those individuals who, for whatever reason, may have dropped out of the system at age 15, 16 or up to 19 or even before that.

I'm sure all of us who have children of that age, or had children of that age at one time, know of friends of theirs or peers of theirs who, for whatever reason, did fall out of the system. I think all of us would feel somewhat sorry for these individuals and, as time goes along, probably more so now because we all realize that in this newer, more highly technological age, you need greater and greater skills.

Certainly you need a basic education if you want to have a job that amounts to anything, and I think most of us would say if somebody at age 21, 22 or older realizes they're not going to get anywhere in life without at least getting their high school education and maybe from there going on into an apprenticeship or training program or college or university, why shouldn't these individuals be given a second chance.

From my understanding of this bill, in effect what this bill does is take those people out of the adult education program, which was perfectly suitable for them, for which the boards of education were receiving adequate financial remuneration, and put them in a totally different stream in the continuing education stream. Who will suffer as a result of that? I submit that ultimately the people who will suffer from those programs becoming optional and no longer being available to the local boards are those youngsters or young adults in their early 20s who simply will no longer have the adult education programs available to them.

They will suffer and I suppose, in the long run, we will all suffer because if those programs are no longer available to those individuals, the likelihood of them getting a productive job in the future in which they will become taxpayers in this province, which the Minister of Finance is always talking about, is less and less as time goes along.

The combination of these two programs being made optional—the junior kindergarten program and the funding of adult education at the local level—will have only one result: that both of these programs will ultimately disappear.

I think there's one thing we ought to appreciate as well. It's wonderful to pass all these things down to the local level, whether we're talking about municipalities or whether we're talking about the local school boards, and to simply say they're the people who are in the best position to make these decisions. But quite frankly, we all know, from some of us having served in those different capacities, that the pressures on the local boards of education and the pressure on the local municipalities to keep those tax increases down to next to nothing or to nothing, which certainly has been the case for most local governing bodies over the last year or two in the province of Ontario, is just as hard, just as tough as it is on us here at this level, and some would say it's even a lot tougher and a lot harder because they are after all the two levels of government that are closest to the people and do hear from the people even more directly than we do in this place.

1650

What it all basically boils down to is that, yes, you will save some money here initially, and yes, the \$400 million that you cut out of the education field will affect

these programs, even though of course we all know that the original promise was that money would not be taken out of classroom education. I always thought that was kind of interesting. If you have autonomous boards that basically run their own operations, how can you say to them, "We will cut out money but you can only take it out of the administration side of things," and at the same time tell them, "You are an autonomous body and you can run your own show the way you want to as a local board etc"?

There's obviously a real conflict there, because it really doesn't make a heck of a lot of sense to give somebody autonomy and at the same time tell them that they can't do certain things, such as not taking this money out of classroom education. So the basic end result is that these moneys will be coming out of the educational system through the school boards not just within areas of administration but also in classrooms.

I've had the opportunity over the last three or four months to speak to a fair number of teachers, some of them who are involved with their teaching federations locally and some of them who are not, but they are absolutely convinced that one of the results of this entire process is that you're going to have much greater numbers in each class. The numbers in each class are going to go up. The number of students is going to go up from anywhere to four to five to six students per class.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): How do you know?

Mr Gerretsen: Because an awful lot of teachers are being laid off because the boards of education simply can no longer pay them. It's as simple as that. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to figure that out.

If you were open and honest and at least went to the people of Ontario and said, "We don't think it is appropriate to have a student-teacher ratio of 20 or 22 to one in the primary grades and"—what is it?—"25 or 26 to one at the higher grades," if you came out honestly and openly and said, "We think it should be four students more," at least there would be some intellectual honesty there, and whether that's right or wrong, we could at least have an argument about it, could discuss it. You may be right; we may be right. But what you're doing now is saying, "Oh, we're not taking it out of the classroom; classroom sizes won't be affected," yet we've got layoff notices all over the place to teachers.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Not in Waterloo.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm glad the member is at least listening a little to what's being said.

Mr Wildman: Give him credit. He's hanging on every word.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm sure he is, as are you, of course.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): We normally do when you speak, John.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much.

Mr Sampson: Unlike what they did in council at Kingston.

Mr Gerretsen: I could tell you a little bit about Kingston, but I've done that before. I can tell you this, though, that as the tourist season rapidly approaches, make sure this year you go down to the Thousand Islands and you into the Kingston area. We have Fort Henry, and

as soon as the government decides to fund that program again this year, we will have at least, by last year's count and hopefully this year again, about 100,000 people visit Fort Henry. Take a boat ride through the Thousand Islands. I'm sure the member from Mississauga is well aware of it. He's shaking his head. I know he's taken many boat rides in the Thousand Islands. Some of them he could talk about and some of them he probably can't talk about. In any event, come and visit the Kingston area. We have many historic sites and buildings—

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: We've had a little bit of fun. I hope you will come down to Kingston. We certainly will make it a very hospitable experience for you, regardless of whether you're a member of the government. We like to see people from all persuasions, because we realize it's good for business, and it's good for the tourist business. The tourist business is rapidly becoming the number one business in Ontario, and it certainly is in the Kingston area.

Come and see Queen's University. We have one of the Alma Mater Society representatives in our gallery right now. Queen's University, one of the oldest universities and most highly renowned in all of Canada. It forms an integral part of our community. We always say that's one of the things that make Kingston unique, the fact that we have 10,000 to 12,000 lively, vibrant students in our community, both at Queen's and at Royal Military College, that basically provide a vibrancy to the community that certainly makes us unique and apart.

I was very pleased to read in the Queen's Alumni Review just within the last week or so that about 10 members in this House have had the honour and privilege of graduating from Queen's University. It's unfortunate that six of these members are on the government side—not for them personally.

Anyway, getting back to the education side of things—

Mr Wildman: Well, Queen's had something to do with it.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, Queen's has certainly got something to do with it. It's a great educational establishment, and it's certainly a leader in many respects.

Mr Speaker, let me finish off, and then I hope you will allow me to turn it over to the critic for education, the member for Ottawa Centre. Let me just say that this government prides itself on openness and honesty. I'm going to give them some free advice at this point. I think they would get a lot further with the people of Ontario if they were really open and honest about what they're doing. Whether we're talking about hospital cuts—they're still in denial about that, that they're not cutting the health care system, even though they're cutting \$1.3 billion out of the hospital system in Ontario.

The Minister of Health is here right now, and I'm glad to see him here. Yes, you have cut \$1.3 billion.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): To reinvest.

Mr Gerretsen: If you are going to reinvest it, what a business individual would do is that you would come up with your reinvestment plan first, and you would say: "Here is the reinvestment plan. This is what we're going to do. Here is where we're going to take the money, the \$1.3 billion, in order to reinvest that." That's how you

would handle it. You do not take \$1.3 billion out of the system first and then say that at some point in the future—as your parliamentary assistant one day said in the House and at the hearings—"As long as we spend the same amount again in the year 1999, we've met our commitment, and in the meantime if it goes down \$1 billion or \$2 billion per year, somehow we are still living up to our commitment." Well, that is wrong.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: That's what you said. Hansard will bear me out.

I shouldn't make comments about the minister leaving. I'm sure he's got many very important things to do.

In any event, if the government were more open and more honest with the people of Ontario in saying exactly what it's going to do and not, how shall I say, stonewall the situation—which leads me to one other very quick comment. It's a general comment, a comment I get from a lot of the public out there. I'm sure that a lot of the newer members in the Conservative Party and in my party and in the NDP could relate to this.

Many people ask me: "Why do ministers never answer a question? Why don't they ever say, 'I don't know anything about that; I'll find out and let you know tomorrow'?" I think I've heard that once or twice here in the House in the last six or seven months I've been here. What is wrong with that? Of course, I tell them there's nothing wrong with that. But as somebody—and this person will remain nameless—said to me one time, "Of course you realize, John, it may be question period but it's not answer period." I guess for all the different cabinets, in all former governments as well—I remember watching—it's the same thing: You get a question and there is never a simple, straightforward answer.

Maybe we should do politics differently in this province. If we really want to do politics differently, then why don't we make the ministers accountable? Why doesn't the Speaker or somebody say: "Answer that question. If you don't know the answer, tell him you don't know the answer." I think in the long run you would get much greater respect from the people of Ontario than this institution currently gets.

1700

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I draw your attention to section 23:

"In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:...

"(b) Directs his or her speech to matters other than:

"(i) the question under discussion."

What has this got to do with the bill under discussion, the fact that ministers do or don't answer questions?

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, of course the member was not correct. We heard the minister here earlier. If he had been more open and honest and direct in the answers he gave today during question period—that's what I was addressing. I was talking on topic, as we always do in the opposition, and the member should well know that.

The Deputy Speaker: On the point of order: I listened to the debate and I listened to the speaker and I didn't see anything out of order.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. You have no idea how gratified I, as a member of the

opposition, feel in that result, because I know that at least one person, other than my parents at home, is listening to this right now.

In any event, openness and honesty in government: Have public meetings. Tell the people of Ontario that you really don't know exactly how the \$400 million you're cutting out of the educational system is going to be handled or dealt with by each of the boards of education. There may be a number of different results to that. Don't just say, "Oh, it will come out of the administrative costs alone." Let's do that.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will now turn the last five minutes back to the critic for education within our party.

Mr Patten: Mr Speaker, with your approval, I would like to correct the record on something.

Mr Stockwell: Hold it, a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Are you rising on a point of order?

Mr Patten: Yes, a point of order. Thank you to the member for Etobicoke West.

When I gave the example in my presentation of a school board that had 2,000 students and what the impact would be on the poor people, ceilings and the standard mill rate implications, I said that this year's property tax base would account for 77% versus 33% from the province. That should read 23% from the province, obviously, because when you add 77% and 23%, it gives you 100%. I would like to read that into the record.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Stockwell: I want to be directly on topic. I'm responding to the speech just given by the member for Kingston, I believe.

Mr Wildman: And The Islands.

Mr Stockwell: And The Islands; I wouldn't want to forget The Islands.

I want to be very clear. We in this caucus have given a direction to the boards of education around this province, and that direction from our end has been very clear. We're seeking those boards of education, the duly elected principals involved in the municipalities, to find the savings in the administrations, the consulting fees, the upper-echelon parts of education systems that are driving the cost of education up. The figure has been bandied about quite regularly for the past number of years that 47% of the dollars spent on education is spent in an administrative fashion, rather than in classroom spending. It seems to me that any person viewing this with a degree of equitable fairness would say 47% is an excessive expenditure to administer the rest, 53%, of classroom spending.

We in this party, when we campaigned last election, used these figures and asked the people of this good province, "Do you think 47% spent before the money hits the classroom is excessive?" They said yes. With this piece of legislation, we've taken the direction and said to the school boards around this province, "We ask you to make reductions within that 47%."

To the member from Kingston, I have talked to the constituents in my riding and around this province and they believe that can be done. All we're asking for those people who are duly elected to do is reduce their spend-

ing from within the administrative portion. If they won't do it, can't do it, choose not to do it, we can't control that. If we did, if we forced them to take it from there, you'd be standing in this place caterwauling, howling about government bully-boys directing duly elected officials on how they should spend their money.

Mr Wildman: I listened very carefully to my friend from Ottawa Centre and his colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands, and while I appreciate the latter member's tour of his constituency and his part of the province, I want to comment specifically on two matters.

One is in regard to his comment about questions and answers in this place. As a member who's been around here for some time, I would say to him that frankly one of the problems you have is that ministers obviously don't want to answer specific questions, and too often members of the opposition do not give specific questions and so they give ministers the opportunity to respond to preambles to their questions. If you really want to get a specific answer, or an I-don't-know answer, which is quite appropriate at times, it's perhaps better not to put in a preamble.

I would say to the member for Etobicoke West, who commented on the member for Kingston and The Islands' remarks, that the number 47% is dependent on definitions, obviously, and there are many different definitions about what is classroom expenditure and what is administrative.

As a matter of fact, some boards have argued that only between 5% and 10% is administrative. Unfortunately, when you look at Mr Sweeney's report, he has included a lot of things in administration that many classroom teachers would argue are supports for classroom teaching, such as special education, remedial education and so on.

Unfortunately, by using different definitions, we get into arguments about what are and what are not classroom expenditures. It would be much simpler if we would just say everything that benefits students' learning should not be cut, and then I'm afraid the number would not nearly be 47% of the expenditures by boards of education.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member care to take his two-minute response?

Mr Patten: I appreciated the critique of my speech very much, and I want to thank all those who spoke to it. I would like to address, as the member for Algoma has, the comments made by the member for Etobicoke West. His argument is that school boards are directed to cut back on administration. If that's the case, how come 50% of the availability of funds is coming from junior kindergarten, which is a classroom? That's not in that 47% that you—

Mr Stockwell: I didn't say that.

Mr Patten: Yes, you did. You said you're directing school boards to take money out of administration, number one. And the money is not being redistributed back into the system. This money is leaving the system totally. It's coming from areas of junior kindergarten, highly researched to say how important that is, and it's coming from the area of those who want to go on to work or want to go on to higher education and get off

welfare and get off family assistance. That's where the money's coming from. It's going right out of education. It's not being redistributed back to the classroom to help the quality of our education here.

You look at where that money is coming from and where it's going and it does not address what the member for Etobicoke West is trying to imply, and that is to help provide for a more efficient educational system. It's as if the system is broken somehow. The system needs support, the system needs some encouragement, the system needs some restructuring, yes. But take that money and put it into education. It's the most precious thing we have, other than health concerns: the future of our young people and their capacity to be productive in the economy of tomorrow.

1710

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wildman: I am pleased to lead off in the debate on Bill 34 for my caucus and to indicate to the members of the assembly that we consider this to be a very important debate. This is a central issue in Ontario today. Opinion polls have indicated that, other than health care, education is the most important matter Ontarians are concerned about, and for good reason.

The minister has said in his remarks that the government is committed to excellence in education, an affordable education that provides opportunities for students to learn and to develop and to obtain the skills they need in order to be productive in our society. I think all of us would argue that, yes, we should indeed be striving for excellence in education. But our concern about Bill 34 and the commitments made by this government is that they in themselves are threatening the excellence of our education system in the province. That's why we consider this debate to be so important.

We've just had over the last few minutes in this Legislature some discussion about the commitments made by the Conservatives when they ran in the election campaign prior to June 1995. In that campaign, as we all know, the now government said clearly that they were going to make cuts, but those cuts would be made outside of the classroom, that classroom education would be exempted from the cuts. That was a clear commitment made by this government.

They didn't have the kind of qualifiers that the member for Etobicoke West has just put on that commitment. They didn't say: "It's not really up to us. It's up to the boards and we can't force them." They said clearly that classroom education would be exempt. I think it's important for us to look at what is actually happening across the province in education, in classrooms, and what is being proposed by boards right across the province in order to be able to find the savings that have been mandated by this government because of the announced cuts in grants that are provided for in Bill 34.

This government made a number of promises when they ran in the election campaign which are frankly contradictory. What is significant is that the member for Etobicoke West, in his remarks, said that he and his colleagues believed—and I understand what he's saying. I know he believes the cuts can be made to the education funding in the province through administrative savings.

He believes it, and I underline the word "believes." It's a matter of faith. But the facts unfortunately don't bear out that faith.

Mr Stockwell: Right. I'm wrong and you are right, Bud.

Mr Wildman: The member for Etobicoke West says that he's wrong and I'm right. What is this, a confession?

Mr Stockwell: That's not what I said. I said I'm Chris and you're Bud.

Mr Wildman: I guess he's right, then.

At any rate, let's look at what was committed by the Conservatives in the election campaign. The government clearly committed to cutting the deficit and balancing the budget over a short period, and also committed to a significant tax cut and committed to protect certain areas of government expenditure. Those commitments were clear, and when the people of the province went into the polling stations on June 8 I hope they understood those commitments. To be fair to the government, the leader of the Conservative Party and his colleagues were out across the province reminding people that these were the commitments, and the people made a choice.

What were those commitments? They were not going to touch classroom education. Nowadays they're saying, "We aren't going to touch classroom education, but maybe the boards are." They didn't say that in May and June 1995. They didn't say, "We're going to cut the money and hope and believe that classroom education won't be affected." They said, "Classroom education will be exempt."

Mr Stockwell: It is.

Mr Wildman: The member for Etobicoke West can't have it both ways. He just a moment ago said the boards might not follow the directive of the government and that the government couldn't force them to. The Tories did not say that in May and June 1995. The Conservatives said clearly that classroom education was going to be exempt.

They also said, when they were talking to farmers, that agricultural expenditures would be exempt and that agriculture would get its fair share, that it hadn't been getting its fair share for so long and was going to get its fair share. As a matter of fact, some farmers, I guess incorrectly, understood that to mean there was actually going to be an increase in agricultural expenditures.

They also said, as they did with classroom education, that the health care envelope was sealed, that it would not be cut—not that it might be cut now and more money put back in later, but that the envelope was sealed. We all know that's not the case.

This government also said that law enforcement would be exempt, as would classroom education.

The point is that you can't do all these things at once. The reality is that you're trying to do what is impossible in the current fiscal situation. You can't exempt all these areas, which are substantial in terms of the total budget of the province—health care and education are two of the biggest expenditures of the government—and at the same time have a tax cut and not have the deficit go up. It's impossible.

I think it's fair to say that the Tories, when they ran, believed it was possible—emphasis again on "belief" and

"faith." They did believe it. Unfortunately, as an article of faith, it may be something one can impress upon oneself every evening prior to retiring, but perhaps it does not really bear out in reality. And that's what we're seeing happening across the province these days: The numbers just don't add up.

I realize that the leader of the Conservative Party, the Premier, said—I recall the incident when he said this during the election campaign—that he wasn't very good with numbers. I don't pretend to be particularly good with numbers either. If he wasn't particularly good with numbers, that might explain why he believed it was possible to do the impossible with these numbers: to avoid a deficit increase, to actually bring it down and to bring down debt and at the same time have a major tax cut.

1720

We have the equivalent of that continuing in this Legislature as the Treasurer, the Minister of Finance, continually gets up in this House and says that all the cuts that have been announced to education and to the other areas I've mentioned have simply to do with the deficit, have nothing to do with the other part of the government's fiscal plan. How they can split up their fiscal plan like that is beyond me. Obviously, it's all part of a package. You can't say, "We're dealing with the deficit today and up until early May, and then after that we're dealing with the tax cut, and the two aren't related." Of course they are. The cuts being made today relate to the deficit certainly, but they also relate to the tax cut; and if you can't finance the tax cut adequately through the cuts you're making to services and expenditures, you're going to have to borrow money to finance at least part of the tax cut. You're going to have to borrow more money and the deficit is going to go up. Why not just come clean and admit it?

It is true that one of the problems they have in admitting it, I guess, is the fact that the Premier made a couple of other statements in the campaign. He made it very clear that he would resign if he broke any of his promises. He said he was going to resign. I thought that was a very courageous statement. I thought this was a man who really believed in his program and he was going to try and make sure that he did it and, if he didn't do it, he would then resign and leave office.

Mr Gerretsen: You didn't really think so, did you?

Mr Wildman: Well, that's what he said.

Mr Gerretsen: I know, but you didn't really think so.

Mr Wildman: When questions have been raised, and I mentioned the issue of questions and how questions are asked and answered around this place, but when questions are raised in the House, very direct questions, not ones with long preambles, where a member on this side of the House will get up and say to the Premier through the Speaker: "You promised to do such-and-such"—whether it be to protect classroom education or whether it be to protect agricultural spending and programs or whatever—"but you've done the opposite. You've cut this much money"—

Mr Stockwell: In your opinion.

Mr Wildman: No, no. We're talking about cuts that have been announced by members of the executive council.

"You've cut this money. Isn't that breaking a commitment? Isn't that a broken promise?" It's a direct question, and then the Premier gets up and gives a very direct answer. He simply says no and sits down.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Well?

Mr Wildman: Well, it's a broken promise. I know, Mr Speaker, it would be completely inappropriate for me to suggest that the Premier is not being completely honest in his answer, so I would not say that. I would not ever want to say something that was inappropriate in this place. I never have over the years. We are all honourable members in this House, and I know when the Premier makes a statement in this House he is being honourable. He doesn't have to have that "Hon" in front of his name in order to be considered honourable. All of us are honourable members.

When the Premier says he is not breaking a promise, that it isn't a broken promise, he must believe that, and I guess some of the members who belong to the party that supports the government also believe it. But the point is he's wrong. You can't say on the one hand, "We are going to protect classroom education," then cut a whole lot of money out of grants that result in classroom education being adversely affected and then stand up and say, "We haven't affected classroom education." You have.

Even if you say it indirectly, as the member for Etobicoke West said it, and say, "We didn't do it; we just cut the grants; they did it; the board that gets the grants did it," the fact is that classroom education is not exempt. The Premier has said that he has no intention of resigning because he hasn't broken any promises, but every person who has a child enrolled in junior kindergarten knows the truth.

Mr Stockwell: We said we were cutting junior kindergarten.

Mr Wildman: Oh, no, they didn't say that. The member is wrong. They said they were going to make it optional. That's what they said. What is interesting is that the member for Etobicoke West in his interjection has admitted that by saying they were going to be making it optional, they were saying they were going to cut it, which is exactly what he said just now. I appreciate the member for Etobicoke for being so straightforward in saying that by making it optional, what the Tories were saying is that they were going to cut the program, and that's exactly what's happening.

Mr Preston: He didn't say that.

Mr Froese: That's his opinion.

Mr Wildman: Oh, that's his opinion. Perhaps that's worth about as much as the opinion of the Premier when he gets up and says he didn't break any promises. The fact is that the Premier has not been able to keep his commitments. I'm sure he wanted to. Those commitments have been broken, but he blatantly says they have not been and he has no intention to resign.

Let's look at this document that is called the Common Sense Revolution. I have a number of drafts of this document. It says on page 3: "Cut Non-Priority Government Spending. Total 'non-priority' spending will be reduced by 20% in three years, without touching a penny of health care funding. Other priority areas of law

enforcement and classroom funding for education will also be exempt." It doesn't say with a little asterisk there "as long as the boards go along with this"; it says that classroom funding for education will be exempt. It doesn't say it's dependent on the boards; it doesn't say, "The boards have to agree with us"; it says, "No, it's exempt."

If we look at page 8 of this well-known document under the heading "Education," it doesn't say it will be exempt from cuts; it says, "Classroom funding for education will be guaranteed." It doesn't say, "It's guaranteed as long as the boards agree with us"; it says "guaranteed."

"Our principle of 'classroom-based budgeting' will help ensure that this essential service is protected and, indeed, that excellence in education and training is enhanced."

In the next paragraph it also talks about proposals made by the Tory party in the document it had presented prior to the election campaign called New Directions, Volume Two: A Blueprint for Learning in Ontario. In the estimates debate, the Minister of Education and Training essentially repudiated the document New Directions Volume Two: A Blueprint for Learning in Ontario, and said that document was developed two years prior to the election, that the fiscal situation had deteriorated and that you can't hold him to what it says in that document. The unfortunate thing is that in May and June 1995, the Conservatives weren't saying, "What the document we put out a couple of years ago said doesn't count any more." In fact, this refers to it, saying, "Our proposals for education reform are outlined in detail in our policy document, New Directions, Volume Two: A Blueprint for Learning in Ontario."

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): They have a number of different editions, I think.

Mr Wildman: I have the wrong edition?

Mr Marchese: They have some Liberal editions on the other side.

Mr Wildman: I see.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Why don't you read page 12 under "Junior Kindergarten" and find out—

Mr Wildman: I know what it says. I've got page 12 right here. It says, under junior kindergarten, "Government has continued this trend by making junior kindergarten mandatory for all primary schools as of the new school year in September. There is growing uncertainty among educators and parents about the wisdom of busing," and so on, and then it says—

Mr Preston: No, no. Not so. But carry on.
1730

Mr Wildman: I am going to. It says here, "Until a complete review has been made of the impact of junior kindergarten, we will allow school boards to opt out of the program," and that is exactly what the government is doing. In this particular case, in fact, you have kept your promise. But the government has also cut the funding, so it isn't really optional if you don't have any money. It's like saying to an individual, "You have the option of buying a Mercedes-Benz instead of a Chevrolet, but I'm not going to give you the money for the Mercedes-Benz; I'm only going to give you the money for the Chevrolet.

But the option is up to you." That's the position this government has taken. It's not really an option at all, because unless you have the money to provide the junior kindergarten program, you can't continue the program. It is impossible.

Mr Marchese: And most boards don't have the money.

Mr Wildman: And most boards do not have the money.

Bill 34, the bill that we are debating here, in our view completely contradicts the general commitments, the overall commitments, made by the Tories in the election campaign to protect classroom education. I don't know whether the Minister of Education is unaware of the commitments that were made. He certainly doesn't like the commitments that were made in the New Directions booklet, because it talks about actually doing a number of things that this government apparently is not prepared to do. But I agree that maybe he's unaware of those. It's possible. He wasn't here.

It was the member for London North who developed the New Directions booklet. We know that she really wanted to be the Minister of Education and Training, but the Premier chose not to appoint her to that portfolio and instead appointed her to a more important one. I remember when the Premier appointed his cabinet. There was some criticism by the media. I know the media are wont to make these criticisms and I know the member for Etobicoke West is also wont to make criticisms. It was, I know, one of the great disappointments of his career, but—

Mr Stockwell: It was a cold day in summer, as I recall.

Mr Wildman: Time will change, I'm sure. Just be patient. But I remember the Premier making a statement in answer to some criticism from the media about some of his appointments in which he said too much knowledge can be dangerous.

Mr Stockwell: That was my problem.

Mr Wildman: I'm sure that was the problem of the member from Etobicoke; he's certainly dangerous.

But you know, when you think about it, this is really turning the poet right on his head, isn't it? Because the poet said a "little" knowledge is a dangerous thing, not "too much." But the Premier has said that too much knowledge could be dangerous and therefore that explained why he did not want to have "experts" in various portfolios. We know that the British parliamentary system is a system that is dependent on rule by amateurs, and the government is attempting to fulfil that commitment in terms of our parliamentary system.

The new minister, not long after he was appointed, had a session with his senior bureaucrats which, unfortunately for him, was videotaped. I suppose the title of that particular tape was probably Cuts, Lies and Videotape, starring John Snobelen, but I wouldn't call it that. I would call it a gross mistake, an error on the part of the minister.

In that the minister said the government was committed to making major changes in the education system, and to be able to get the populace, the people to agree and to accept the need for these major changes, a crisis

had to be created in education, and he has set about doing everything possible since to create that crisis.

He certainly has achieved that. In the last eight months he has created a major crisis in education in Ontario, and he seems to be proud of it. He seems to be very pleased with the problems teachers and school trustees and administrators and students and parents are facing in education, thanks to the cuts made by this government.

What have we seen? What kind of crisis are we facing? We are seeing mass layoff notices, far higher than we've ever seen in Ontario. I admit they are only notices and that not all of them will be laid off—I hope not all of them will be laid off—but the numbers of notices and the magnitude of those notices this year are much greater than they've ever been.

When this is raised, there are a lot of comments made on the other side. They argue a number of things. For instance, they might argue that because of the deficit strong measures have to be taken because we have to help the children of tomorrow. We can't saddle them with the debt.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: The member across the way said our government never worried about that. That is of course not true. The fact is, we did make cuts, and you know we made cuts. If you were Minister of Natural Resources, you know very well that we made cuts.

But the irony of this, particularly as it relates to education, but you can talk about social services or health care in the same way, is that supposedly to help the children of tomorrow and save them from debt, the government is doing everything possible to hurt the kids of today. You're hurting programs that are benefiting kids today in order to somehow help their kids tomorrow. It doesn't make sense.

The suggestion that somehow to save the next generation we should clobber this generation I don't think makes a lot of sense. That's exactly what this government is doing and that's what Bill 34 is about in terms of education.

We've had all sorts of situations occurring in this crisis in education that has been created. I've got a number of articles—

Mr Preston: Probably written by the Star.

Mr Wildman: No. There are different newspapers here. One is the Hamilton Spectator and one is the Ottawa Citizen.

These stories are describing what's happening in education today in this province. We've been bantering back and forth, but frankly this is, as we all agree, a very serious issue. We may have disagreement about it, but here we have a situation where we have students walking out of their classrooms protesting what they think are changes that are coming because of decisions made by boards as a result of the cuts in funding from the provincial government that threaten programs that are important to these students.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: It's been suggested across the way that teachers are telling them to walk out. I don't know whether that's true; I think it would be most irresponsible of teachers to do that. But the point is you have in the

Hamilton Spectator a story about Glendale Secondary School where 100 students walked out in February to protest cuts in education funding because 15 teachers at Glendale Secondary School were losing their positions, they thought. They got their notices, and some of them will actually lose their jobs.

1740

Then we have another story about the Catholic school system in Hamilton, where students are joining the fight against education cuts. We have a situation where students at St Mary's Catholic secondary school were going to join the rally, even though the school board and the school wanted them to stay in class, because they were concerned about changes in education and what it would mean in terms of the cuts.

In the Ottawa Citizen we have a story here from last month about adult high school students protesting possible closure of their program, that more than 300 adult high school students—we're not talking here about adolescents; we're talking about adults who have gone back to school to upgrade themselves, get the skills they require, the kind of thing this government wants them to do, supposedly. I would certainly want them to do that. But I think the government says they want people to upgrade themselves, get the skills they require to be productive, provide for their families and contribute to society. These are adults who have dropped out of school as adolescents, most of them, and now are going back to school to get those skills, those very skills the government wants them to get. But 300 of these adult high school students went to the streets because they are worried that their school is going to close, and they protested outside the Ottawa Board of Education offices on Gilmour Street.

It's not often that you get students so concerned about the future of their education that they will walk out and protest, and you don't often have it happening in so many different places at once across the province. The reason this is happening is because, yes indeed, we have a crisis in education today in Ontario.

These are students who are concerned about their education. They're concerned about their futures. They're worried that the cuts that have been made by this government to the boards of education and the Catholic separate school boards that provide the programs upon which they depend to get the kind of education they require and need—that those programs are going to be cut and they're not going to be able to get the kind of programs they need.

I know it's not just members of the opposition who are hearing about these things. I know that members of the Conservative Party, members of the back bench, are getting flak when they go home from teachers, from parents, perhaps from students as well, about changes and cuts being made to education in our own communities. I suppose they're finding it difficult to persuade the public, the people who voted for them, that they indeed are not breaking the promises made to exempt classroom education from the cuts. They must be having a difficult time justifying the fact that many, many teachers and other support staff are going to be laid off, and you can't

pretend that all those teachers are outside the classroom, because they aren't.

The fact is, as in most large private sector companies, in education when layoffs are proposed it is usually—not always, but usually—last in, first out. That means the younger teachers are losing their jobs. It means those younger teachers in most cases are the teachers who are indeed in the classroom, and it may mean that people who have been in the classroom in the past but are now in other roles in education will be moved back into the classroom.

But I ask very seriously for members of the government party to consider this: Is it good for education, is it good for classroom education, to lose the new blood in the system? I don't think it is. I don't think these layoffs are good in one way or the other. I don't think it makes sense for us at this point in Ontario's history to be saying to the teaching profession that a large number of the teachers of this province should be out of work, that they should be out of jobs. I don't think it makes sense.

I think it is indeed a crisis, and not just a crisis in their own personal lives, in their family lives, that suddenly after working maybe five, six, seven, eight years in some cases, they're going to be out of a job. Certainly that's a crisis for them and their families. But I think it's very, very bad for education. I think it's bad for classroom education. I think it's bad for students. And this government will have to wear that. They cannot get away from it. The fact is, because of their commitments that are not being kept because of the changes in funding in education, that is what is going to happen. We don't know what the final numbers are—that's true—but mark my words, there will be layoffs.

I would hope that the members of the Conservative backbench will bring the concerns of their constituents about the future of education, about the future of students, to the minister, to the caucus and to the Legislature, and that they will represent the concerns of their constituents. It doesn't do any good to stand here and to say in response to constituents, "But we believe that the cuts can be made elsewhere and don't have to be made in classroom education and we don't have to lay off young teachers in order to do this, and it's the board's fault."

Frankly, if it means that the students' education is going to be hurt, it doesn't make a lot of difference to the students who's at fault. The fact is, funding is being taken out of the system, \$1 billion in one year, and the minister admits that. He says at least \$800 million, not \$400 million, because it's annualized, and if you can make \$1 billion, he'd be happy. He said that. You can't do that without affecting classroom education. It doesn't matter how many times Conservatives get up and say, "But we believe it can be done administratively"; it won't be.

What we've got is a situation where \$430 million in what amounts to a four-month period, and then going back to last July, has been cut from primary and secondary education in the province. I don't think I have to explain why that's \$1 billion or \$800 million. I think everyone here understands that. Because of the different fiscal years of boards as opposed to the provincial

government's fiscal year, it means that the boards essentially have to make those savings in a four-month period. So annualized it has major, major impact. As I said, the minister has said clearly that he welcomes that. If the boards take between \$800 million and \$1 billion out of the system, all the better, but the point is, that can't be done without affecting classroom education.

I don't know, if we were actually only taking \$400 million or \$430 million out of the education system over a 12-month period instead of a four-month period, whether that could be taken out without affecting classroom education. But I can tell you, you can't take \$1 billion out without affecting it. I know that.

The point is that on June 8 nobody in this province voted to take \$1 billion out of education in this province in one year; not one voter voted for that. And not one Conservative candidate said that was what was going to happen. As a matter of fact, because of what Conservative candidates were saying, I suspect most voters voted to protect classroom education. Nobody voted for this Tory attack on education, for this Tory attack on students. I suspect that many backbenchers on the other side of the aisle wouldn't have voted for that themselves. Nobody, probably including many members of the party that supports the government, voted for mass layoffs of teachers. Maybe some did, but I think more of Tory members than that. I don't think they would have voted for that.

1750

That's what Bill 34 is about. It's a toolkit, so-called, that the Minister of Education and Training is providing to boards to allow them or to help them—he uses the word "allow"—to smash education in the province. He says it's permissive in most cases, that they're just allowing the boards to clobber students; that if they don't want to, I guess they can raise taxes. But then he says in the House that he doesn't want them to raise taxes. Again this is a sort of option thing: "You have an option to raise taxes, but we don't want you to raise taxes, so you don't really have an option to raise taxes."

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): If you can't find 2% of an operating budget—

Mr Wildman: The Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines says that I should be able to find it. All I know is what is happening. Let's look at what is happening in terms of the education system.

These are not all the notices that have been given out, but there are a number of them: Hamilton-Wentworth, 1,003 layoff notices issued; Peel region, the minister's own riding, 519 layoff notices issued; east Parry Sound, the Minister of Finance's own riding, 88 layoff notices issued—that's one third of all the teachers in that system; Kitchener-Waterloo, in the Minister of Labour's riding, 477 layoff notices; Simcoe county, 952 layoff notices issued; Lincoln, 267 layoff notices; Muskoka, 50 layoff notices issued; Carleton, 450 layoff notices; Cochrane-Iroquois, 14 layoff notices; Haldimand, 113 layoff notices; Halton, 1,501 layoff notices; Hastings, 528 layoff notices; Lakehead, 149 layoff notices; Lambton, 52; London, 411; Manitoulin, 15; Northumberland, 312;

Oxford, 540; Waterloo, 477; Wellington, 314; York region, 300-plus; Kapuskasing-Smooth Rock Falls, 22; Prescott and Russell, 40; Dufferin county, 40; York separate board, 418 layoff notices; Victoria county, 54 layoff notices; Niagara south, 280 layoff notices.

That's enormous. It's unprecedented. We have never seen these kinds of notices being given out at this time of year in previous years. It's never happened. It's not just a coincidence. I don't know whether the Conservative members think that somehow this is a conspiracy among the boards to make them look bad, but this is happening. That's what's happening out there across the province.

I reiterate that while, in the last analysis, not all these positions will be eliminated, there will indeed be major layoffs. A lot of the people who receive these notices are not going to have a job come September. That's what's going to happen. It's not a matter of faith or belief; it's the reality of the situation for these teachers and for their students and for the education systems in these various parts of the province.

How do you think that situation affects the morale in these education systems? Let's think about that for a minute and what effect that's having on classroom education. If these people don't know whether or not they're going to have a job and think that as of May 31 they may be told they are going to be out of work in September, how do you think that's affecting their performance in the classroom? I suspect many of these people are feeling very uncertain about their families and themselves, about their futures and financial obligations. They're feeling sorry and worried about the education of their students. They cannot be performing to an optimum level as teachers for those students in this kind of situation. It's inconceivable that they could somehow ignore the fact that they may be out of work in a few months and just go on as if everything were fine. In fact, the morale among teachers is at an all-time low.

We are indeed in a crisis in education, a crisis that has been brought on by the decisions of the minister and the

government. It doesn't matter how many times Conservatives get up and say, "We believe these changes can be made at the administrative level"; the fact is that teachers and their morale are being hit hard because of these decisions and these notices, and that's adversely affecting classroom education in the province.

There's another point, of course: It's going to adversely affect, I suspect, collective bargaining between boards and teachers, and we may see major disruptions in collective bargaining across the province in the months going into September and into the fall. That will affect classroom education, particularly if it leads to work disruptions.

I don't see how Conservative members can stand here in this House day after day and say: "We're meeting our commitment to exempt classroom education. We're protecting classroom education. We're guaranteeing classroom education." We do indeed have a crisis in education, a crisis that didn't need to occur.

All of us recognize that there should be changes in education to keep curriculum and program up to date and meeting the needs of students as our society changes, as technology changes. All of us recognize there has to be change, and change can sometimes be difficult. But this kind of crisis is a crisis that is made and unnecessary. That's why we consider this debate on Bill 34, the toolkit that's making this crisis so real, to be so important, and why we are opposed in principle to the philosophy, the fiscal management and the changes that are behind Bill 34.

Mr Speaker, I have a few further remarks to make on Bill 34. If it is appropriate, at this time I will break my comments and reserve the rest of my time for the next day, if that's acceptable to you and to the members of the assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Thursday 11 April 1996

Jeudi 11 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 avril 1996

*The House met at 1004.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Flaherty moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of Bill 33, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, which is the private member's bill which I brought forward. The bill proposes to amend the act to provide that a member of the assembly shall not receive any indemnity as a member for any period during which the member is suspended from the service of the assembly.

The current situation is that a member of this House who by his or her own misconduct is suspended for a day or longer suffers no financial penalty, that is, the member is paid while suspended. This came as a surprise to me as a newly elected member in June 1995 and also to some of my colleagues who were elected then, and indeed to some of the veteran members, all of whom thought that no work, no pay was the rule, which it is not. The bill proposes that would be the rule and that no work would equal no pay in this place.

The purpose of the bill is also to promote a reasonable standard of behaviour in this place. Presently, there are no consequences for misbehaviour by a member. Indeed, some members may gain publicity for themselves or for a specific concern through their own misconduct without penalty.

I suggest that it is important for members of the provincial Parliament to lead by example. We should not be paid when, through our own misconduct, we are named by the Speaker. We would not expect people who work in the private sector and who are suspended for cause to be paid while they were suspended for cause. Why should politicians have this special privilege?

What we are talking about here is situations in which a member is suspended for cause, that is, due to the member's own conduct or, more accurately, misconduct.

The point is that the member brings the suspension on to herself or himself.

It is vital that this chamber be a place for rational debate of the important issues that face the people of Ontario today and affect the future of our children. We have serious business to attend to here and we are being paid to do it. It is also important that all of us as members individually and collectively seek to improve the image and the reputation of the Legislature and us as legislators, that we emphasize the concept of rational debate, as opposed to puffery and playing to the cameras. All of us need to remember that the purpose of Parliament is to permit free men and women to air honest differences of opinion in open debate. How can we have informed, rational debate in this place when we are howling and interrupting each other? We should be mindful of our negative image to visiting school children and to their teachers, who are here virtually daily, our negative image to visiting dignitaries, to our own constituents who visit here. What negative impressions they must have when they leave this place after visiting.

1010

We should also be mindful of the importance of protecting and enhancing the role and the authority of the Speaker. The chamber protocol memo circulated by the Speaker recently contains examples of two areas in which misconduct by members is common. First of all, the protocol memo noted: "Members may not interrupt another member speaking unless it is for a point of order or a point of privilege. All interjections are out of order." Secondly, "During the day's proceedings, the members should show respect for other members and refrain from interjecting or using disrespectful or offensive language." I say that these two rules are breached regularly in this place.

Philip Laundy, in his book *The Office of the Speaker*, writes: "A Speaker is, or should be, one of the trustees of a nation's liberties. On his fair interpretation of the rules of procedure depends the protection of the rights of members. In protecting these rights he is protecting the political freedom of the people as a whole."

Mr Laundy notes that "the maintenance of order is a fundamental duty of the Speaker," but we must remember that the ultimate authority in matters of order is not the Speaker; it is the House itself. It is us, as members of this place, who are accountable individually and collectively for the standard of conduct, the standard of behaviour here. While it is the Speaker's fundamental duty to maintain order, the ultimate authority is that of us as members of this assembly.

If I may refer to the historical context, in the British House of Commons there was a recognized procedure for dealing with disorderly conduct prior to the reform of the

standing orders there in the 1880s, and the Journal of the House of Commons reflects the infliction of various punishments on offending members ranging from censure to imprisonment. This bill does not propose censure to imprisonment; it proposes that a member who is suspended would lose pay for the period of the suspension.

Today, the procedure which is followed in the British House of Commons upon the naming of a member is provided for in specific terms by the standing orders, although the right of the House to proceed against a member according to ancient usages, should it so desire, is preserved. Again, I refer to Mr Laundry's text on the office of the Speaker.

In the more recent history in this place, since the introduction of the relevant standing order 15 in 1970, the Speaker has named a member and ordered him or her to withdraw from the House for the remainder of the sessional day 68 times, that is to the end of 1995: the total Liberals, 26; the total NDP, 27; the total Progressive Conservative members, 15. The pattern is as follows: the number of total suspensions in the 1970s, in those 10 years, only 10; in the 1980s, 33, an increase of more than 300%; in the first half of the 1990s, to the end of December 1995, already 25 members suspended. It is apparent that suspensions were rare in the 1970s, only 10 in 10 years, but more than tripled in the 1980s. We are well on our way to a record in the 1990s, given 25 suspensions to the end of 1995. This is not a partisan issue. All parties have had members who have been suspended, so one's political party affiliation is not the issue.

With respect to the quantum of the suspension cost, before yesterday's announcement, the indemnity annually, pre-social contract, was \$44,675 per annum, which would be a per diem rate of \$122.39. After the announcement and the pending legislation mentioned by the Minister of Finance yesterday, the indemnity would be \$78,007, which would be a per diem rate, on my arithmetic, of \$213.72.

It may be said by some members here that this bill is an attempt to stifle the opposition. Let it be noted that members of all three parties have been ejected from this chamber throughout its history, both in government and in opposition. This legislation is to the benefit of all members and to the benefit of this institution, and therefore to the benefit of all of the people of Ontario who elected us.

The issue of the conduct of members is broader than members being named, because that is the ultimate sanction, being asked to leave for the day. The level of conduct is a broader issue, with the level of suspensions really just representing the tip of the iceberg.

Members of both the government and the opposition have been ejected over the years. The serious issues, it should be remembered, with which we are faced at this important time for Ontario emphasize the need for rational debate, informed debate, debate in which members listen to each other about the differing points of view. It is important that we as members of the Legislature convey to our constituents and to all of the people of Ontario that we are here to work for them, that we are their employees as taxpayers, that we are serious about

the work that we have sought to do and which they have elected us to do.

I ask for the help of all members in seeking to accomplish this goal of promoting a reasonable standard of behaviour in this place. I urge all members to support Bill 33 by voting for the bill today at second reading.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I appreciate the member bringing this bill before the House because I think it speaks to some of the great paradoxes of this place. We have seen, and the member has presented to us, a lot of information about how often people happen to be ejected from this House and that sort of thing.

I would suggest to the member that there is a direct correlation between the amount of disruption and the changes in the standing orders over the years. You will find that as the standing orders tightened down, often made it very difficult for members to make legitimate points during debate as time was restricted, as members did not have an outlet to tell this House what it was they were concerned about, the issues their constituents were concerned about, there has been increasing disruption in this place.

I think that's unfortunate. I don't think we would want to be seen by the public to be doing these things. But it seems to me that the problem is with the standing orders in general. As you restrict the standing orders, as you make it more difficult for private members, whether they be in the opposition parties or in the government party, to speak, what is going to happen? You're going to have people who do things to make their point. You're going to have people become very angry and very frustrated in this place, as you do anywhere. And guess what? They're going to do things we would appreciate them not doing.

Now, I understand the intent of this. I think we should be better behaved. I think our constituents would be far happier if we presented ourselves in a more professional way. But I would suggest to the member, if he has ever watched the Mother of Parliaments in action, we are very well behaved people.

This is not a place where decorum means everything. This is a place to debate. Debate sometimes becomes emotional, and under those circumstances, people from 130 constituencies and three political parties and one independent are going to have strong views, and if there isn't an outlet, guess what? We're going to have disruption.

The member should understand that by saying to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, "You're going to get thrown out and it's going to cost you \$122," you know what? I'm still going to get thrown out. What you need to do is to change the rules. Don't act in an arrogant way, because that's what's happening. Over the last 15 years, governments of all stripes have restricted us as private members, and to get government's attention, we had to do things like we did with Bill 26, which all of us over here are very proud of because they accomplished what needed to happen. The rules did not permit us to do anything but acquiesce to the government's point of view. We would not have had any public hearings; there would not have been discussion. It needed to happen. As

governments turn the screws, we have this great paradox that exactly the opposite thing happens.

I would suggest to the member that while I appreciate why he's placing it forward, I believe it's the wrong direction. What we need to do is open up debate, permit more opportunities for members to legitimately place their points of view in here, and our behaviour will improve. That's the way I see it and I appreciate the opportunity for being able to speak this morning.

1020

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I will start by saying I will not support this resolution, and I'll try to tell you why clearly. I try to do this in a fairminded way. I understand where the member is coming from. He is a new member to this assembly. He has not been around here long enough to understand the history of this place and what transpires within the House, what the practices have been over the years. I think you have to take into account the history of this House to a certain extent.

The Conservative member stands in this House today and says, "I have a resolution that's going to fix decorum in the House"—and he was trying to be fairminded—"because the opposition parties at times get somewhat out of hand and get kicked out of the House, and we've got to give the Speaker more power so that when the Speaker kicks a member out, that member loses his or her wages," and that somehow is a deterrent to stop me, an opposition member, from doing that. I just want to put on the record, and I'm sure the Conservative members know this, that, my, oh my, you should have been here from 1990 to 1995.

The Conservative caucus was very effective as an opposition party, yelling, screaming, doing everything it could in the House. They brought signs into the House. They brought pink placards into the House. They had all kinds of props in the House. They named every lake. My, oh my. Don't come in here and start preaching to me about how holier than thou you are about the rules, because it was very much the antics of the third party from 1990 to 1995 that led our government to change the rules in this House to limit those kinds of actions. In a way, I regret that we did that.

There were some good things we did in the rules, in limiting the amount of time a member can speak in any one speech. I think the rule to allow the member to have the floor *ad infinitum* was a dumb rule. Moving to 30 minutes was smart. It allows you, as a member, to clearly articulate what you want to say, to give your speech and get done and give the floor to somebody else.

But remember why those rule changes were made. They were made because Mike Harris and the Conservative Party were an effective opposition that was using every rule of the House to obstruct the government's agenda, and we as a government, the New Democratic government, made rule changes in the House that limited the ability for the third party to do what it did in obstructing our agenda. Let's be clear here.

The real problem, and the member from Manitoulin touched on it, is that this is not how you reform Parliament, by bringing forward a bill such as you have now. We need to get past into the next debate, which is, how do you give the members of this assembly an actual role

to play when it comes to the decision of policy in the province? I say that not just as an opposition member; I'm speaking for you in the back bench of the Conservative Party. I've been there, and I understand where you are. It is extremely frustrating to be a member of this assembly, to be a representative of your riding, to come here and to be told by the inner cabinet—not all the cabinet, but the inner cabinet, the chosen few around your Premier who make decisions that you then have to go out and defend, defend what your government is doing as part of government policy.

Admittedly, some of that you agree with as backbenchers. I agreed with much of what our government did. But the real issue is that constituents across this province and across this land are saying, "We want our elected representatives to have a real voice in the House and we want to be able to make sure that those members are accountable, not to the Parliament necessarily, but to the people."

What we should be talking about is parliamentary reform. There are many jurisdictions across the parliamentary system as we know it, the British parliamentary system, which have reformed their system of government to take a look at whether we should have strictly a vote system such as we have in Ontario where a member is elected by first past the post, because the reality is that we elect members to this assembly with less than 50% of the votes cast, we elect governments at majority with less than 50%. We were elected as an NDP government with less than 40%. You were elected as a majority government with around 44% or 45%. Is that true democracy?

I think we need to take a look at proportional representation as one of the things that possibly we should be doing. Maybe we have to have a system where we elect, on a proportional basis, the members of this House, a certain amount of them directly from the riding so that they represent the constituencies and the others from a list, such as they do in Germany and Israel. New Zealand has a new system coming in 1997 that says you have in the House a proportional representation of parties and of members that actually reflects the desire of the people when they cast their ballot in a general election. That's the first issue.

The biggest issue after that becomes, in my view, how do you give those members a role so that it's not just a chosen few in cabinet who say, "We are going to give a 30% tax break," or, "We will do or not do auto insurance," or whatever it might be? You have to have a role where members of the House actually have a say so that their vote is necessary for the government to survive, so there needs to be cooperation between all of the members, not just the members in the government party, to be able to put legislation through. If we were to do that, it would increase the role of us as members. It would make us, by force, much more responsible as members, going back to our constituencies and making sure that we understand truly what our constituents want so that we can come here and represent those views and move forward legislation according to the needs of the constituents and not just of the parties.

I will not be voting for this bill simply because I think it's one of those nice, politically glitzy things you can do

that has absolutely nothing to do with parliamentary reform.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd first like to compliment our member Jim Flaherty for bringing forward this bill. It's certainly, in my opinion, a bill that's long overdue. I'm a little disappointed in the feelings and the comments that I'm hearing from the opposition.

This bill is all about not getting paid when you're not here, when you've been suspended for a misdemeanour or misbehaviour of some sort. This could only be in Ontario; I don't know where else in the world this would be interpreted in this manner. To me, it should be automatic that you would not be paid when suspended. I find it almost embarrassing to be debating an issue such as this when to me it should be very, very obvious. It's totally incomprehensible in my opinion. We're talking about a measure of accountability of personal behaviour of members here in this House. In businesses and unions and many other walks of life, malfeasants and scofflaws are penalized financially when under suspension for breaking the rules. Why should it be any different here in this House?

Certainly during the campaign the decorum of this House came up on many occasions when knocking on doors and when at public meetings. The public are extremely irritated over the performance they observe on the legislative channel when they watch how people behave here in this House, and that's all parties. It's certainly not a partisan issue. They're extremely disappointed in how they perform.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Especially the government backbenchers.

Mr Galt: Particularly the member for Kingston and The Islands, how he speaks out.

They've lost respect for the politicians in general, and I suggest to you that the way we act in this House is part of the reason politicians have lost respect in the province of Ontario. I can just imagine what the headlines will be after this debate when the public and the press start to realize we do get paid after being suspended from this House.

MPPs have been setting a rather bad example. I look up at the gallery often and I see children—actually, they're very mature young people—leaning forward on occasion, looking at rather childish actions—maybe I shouldn't use childish; that's kind of insulting to children—members acting in a very irresponsible manner, and what happens? The security officer comes down and reprimands the child for leaning forward to see what's going on, and down on the floor they can carry on and the Speaker may or may not call them to order. On occasion, they'll be named and suspended. The end result is that they continue getting paid and the poor child up there, because they lean forward, is reprimanded for a misdemeanour. To me, this is a rather reverse reward situation when we're paying somebody for doing something we are telling them they really shouldn't be doing.

Recently we had members, when they were suspended, applauded with a standing ovation by members of their caucus. This is totally unacceptable and just should not be happening in this House.

1030

Paying an MPP while he is suspended is something like expelling a child from school who really didn't want to be in school in the first place, or charging with vagrancy and putting in jail, where it's warm, people who really didn't want to be on the street in the first place. It is rewarding someone for misbehaviour.

I know that emotions run high in debates and I probably have made the odd call myself, but it's certainly out of order, and we should be paying attention to those rules. It's like trying to drive without rules and without enforcing those rules. We make it illegal to make left-hand turns during some of the busy periods, rush-hour traffic. If we didn't have those rules and didn't enforce them, traffic would become total pandemonium. Most drivers follow those rules very willingly because they know it's helpful to everyone else; others only follow those rules because they know there are penalties and they may end up with a summons or charge. The OPP and the police do, in general, try to apply the laws in an equal manner. When the rules are ignored in this House, it's like trying to run a red light in traffic.

When we suspend members and hit them in the pocketbook, there will be a motivation to improve the decorum in this House. I respect what the opposition members have commented on already, that there are other ways, and yes, there are limitations to the debate, but we can't go on forever. There do have to be various rules at various times, and I respect that, but once they're hit in the pocketbook, I'm sure they will look at decorum in a very different way.

I wholeheartedly endorse Bill 33, brought forward by Mr Flaherty, which will ensure that MPPs, when suspended, will not be receiving compensation, remuneration, payment, money of any kind during their period of suspension.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I certainly appreciate the well-intentioned effort of the member in bringing this forward. However, I have to speak in opposition to it.

I find it a little ironic that it would be government members who have forgotten the track record of Premier Harris when Mr Harris was on this side of the House, and many opposition members at that time. Remember the rule that cell phones are not allowed in the House? I recall Mike Harris bringing a cell phone into the House and making a mocking call to Premier Rae. I cannot believe that someone as dignified as the Premier of Ontario would have done that on this side of the House—Mike Harris holding up signs, all the backbenchers waving Blue Jay banners, all those parliamentary things that do not embarrass us and are not childish.

I find it hypocritical and I find it interesting, now that you're on that side of the House, that you feel the opposition should be very much limited in its attempts to get our message across on what this government is doing. This is an ongoing pattern of bullying, of intimidating, of the type of goon mentality that exists often in what this government does. This bill is aimed at the opposition; this bill is aimed clearly at trying to limit our opportunity to debate, our opportunity to speak out, our opportunity to fight against this government.

It's also based on the misconception that MPPs' work is only in this place. I think any of us who have been here for a short time understand that the vast majority of our work as MPPs, if you want to relate it to remuneration, happens outside of question period, that one hour when we sit in here and yell and scream at each other. Most of our work happens in our constituencies, it happens in committees, it happens at our Queen's Park office; it doesn't happen here.

Somehow you're trying to make that correlation. You're saying if you get kicked out because the Speaker feels you have acted in an unparliamentary way, even if a cabinet minister or the Premier, as an example—and I'm not suggesting they would—has lied openly and blatantly about an issue, you're not allowed to say that in this House. If you want to say it in this House and you say it, then you get thrown out, although the record may be very clear, because parliamentary procedure says you can't use those words, so you get turfed out, and government members clap and think it's wonderful. Now they're suggesting that you get fined for that.

Let me tell you that my accountability is not to the government members; my accountability is to my constituents, the people who have elected me and have put me here. If my constituents are unhappy with my behaviour in the House, if my constituents are unhappy with the positions I take in this House and if my constituents are unhappy with the fact that I may have been thrown out of the House on a number of occasions, then they will tell me that four years from now, when we go back to the polls. They're the judge and jury here, not government rules to stifle opposition.

That's all this is: simply another attempt by this government to try to intimidate, bully and stifle the opposition in this House. It's a pattern we've seen with Bill 26; it's a pattern we've seen with the principal in Scarborough who got a call from the minister's office because she dared to criticize this government; it's a pattern we've seen with the children's aid society in Simcoe county, which got a call from the minister's office and they're scared out of their boots because, "How dare you criticize what we're doing, so fall into line." This is what we're seeing here and these are typical, ongoing efforts of this government.

If you want to talk about performance and work in the House, then let's apply the rule to the cabinet ministers who don't show up. I'm sure there's a good reason why they're not here, but they're not doing their work in the House when they're not here. Based on their salary, it's probably about \$1,000 they would be docked while they're not here. If you're a parliamentary assistant, we'll probably bump that up a little more. There are lots of those on that side of the House who get those nice perks. If you're a whip or deputy whip on that side of the House, we'll bump it up even further. But those rules don't apply that way. They only apply if you get thrown out of the House. If you're a cabinet minister and you're on holidays or at a conference somewhere or out of the House, you're not doing your job in the House, so the same principle would apply. But you're not getting your pay docked; it's only if you're in opposition and you're unparliamentary and you get turfed out.

You can look at a sort of penalty setup where at the end of the year, like you do in hockey, you would put up the number of penalty minutes you would get: two minutes for yelling at Palladini, maybe five minutes for yelling at Eves, and if you're really bad and yell at the Premier, you get a 10-minute penalty. We could really get creative with the kinds of censures and punishments we want to put on members of the opposition.

The reality is, and my friend from the NDP talked about it earlier, parliamentary reform is what is needed. If government members are serious about how this place operates, allow some parliamentary reform; allow some proper debates on issues. Change some of the rules you fought so hard against when you were in opposition that limited debate. Allow some free votes. Give your backbenchers some flexibility to represent their constituents. Do the type of parliamentary reform that is necessary.

This is simply, in my view, a bullying, intimidating act by a bullying, intimidating government. I'm not going to support it, you're not going to be able to impose it and this is absolutely ridiculous. Get down to some real reform and stop playing these games.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I want to indicate my fundamental opposition to this bill on a number of fronts. First of all, I think by this bill this member tells us all of his inexperience in this House, because those of us who have been here for a while understand that work in this House is only a small part of the work that an MPP does. This member will discover, as a government backbencher, that what will get him re-elected or not re-elected is not what the government does or doesn't do or necessarily what happens in this House. It will be the constituency work that is done; it will be the work with the civil service that is done; it will be the work with municipal councils and community organizations that is done; it will be all the other work that takes up about 90% of an MPP's time if he or she is a good MPP.

To suggest that what happens in this House during the few months of the year when it meets should somehow determine all these issues indicates to me how little this government member knows about the work of an MPP. Let me say that I fundamentally oppose it for that reason.

There is an even stronger reason I oppose this bill. Parliamentary democracy depends upon an opposition. Majority governments don't need a parliamentary opposition; the public needs a parliamentary opposition for democracy to function well. The public needs a parliamentary opposition that is free to oppose, that is free to delay, that is free to criticize, and, on the occasions when something is really wrong in this place, the public needs an opposition which is free to show fundamental opposition to what the government is doing.

1040

This bill is really about a government that thinks it is next to God and that it should somehow be able to define and restrict the functioning of parliamentary democracy.

Let me point out the give and take of this House for the benefit of the member. We saw in this House last fall something that I think is unprecedented in a parliamentary democracy. We saw a government come in here on the day when almost all opposition members were in a

budget lockup, or something very akin to a budget lockup, and we saw the government try to introduce a bill which fundamentally changes democratic institutions in this government without giving the opposition any notice. When the opposition reacted angrily and when the opposition expressed fundamental opposition to this breach of democracy, the answer of this government is: "Then we need to shut down the opposition. We need to restrict the opposition."

This is government legislation posing as a private member's bill. This is a government attempt to interfere with the fundamental working of parliamentary democracy and the fundamental working of parliamentary opposition. I'm ashamed this is even debated here in the House, this bill itself is such a fundamental breach of democracy.

The fact is that in a majority parliamentary system, at the end of the day a majority government gets its way and there is nothing the opposition can do about that. It can delay, it can even obstruct, but at the end of the day the government will get its legislation. So why the opposition on the part of the government bench to individual members of the opposition showing their fundamental opposition to government motives and to government action?

I can't disagree more with this bill and I can't say more strongly that as far as I'm concerned, this is a government attempt to muzzle the opposition masquerading as a private member's bill and shouldn't even be here in the House for debate.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to make a few comments with respect to the bill that's been introduced by my friend from Durham Centre. I will be supporting the bill.

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: The member for Kingston and The Islands says, "Show some originality." The problem we've found in the House, certainly since I've been elected, is the whole issue of decorum. Yes, the members can say, "They're worse than we are," and "They're worse than they are," and that sort of thing, and there's no question that examples can be shown from all sides as to how terrible the other is. We all can list examples. There's a member sitting in the Legislature now who lately has taken to going up and sitting in the gallery and trying to incite the public to make remarks.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Name names.

Mr Tilson: We all know who it is. And there have been very serious criticisms made with respect to the Speaker, the Speaker who's sitting, whether it be the Deputy Speaker or others. The question is, do we respect the office of the Speaker? Obviously, in my observation lately, we do not, whoever that person is. Do we respect the institution of this place?

There are all kinds of examples with respect to decorum. We have a rule in this House, for example, standing order 20(b), that says, "When a member is speaking, no other member shall interrupt such member, except on a question of order." What does that mean? Why should we even have that standing order? It doesn't mean a thing, not one absolute purpose. Out of frustration, the member

for Durham Centre is making an attempt to resolve the problem of decorum in the House.

We start talking about the issue of respect. We have children in school hopefully trying to respect their teachers; we try to teach that. We have the public hopefully trying to respect the police, respecting the uniform. We have the issue of respect for women and children, particularly the whole issue of abuse of women and children. There are problems in that area.

There's the issue of respect for each other. Either we respect each other or we don't. This is not a question of doing away with opposition. Yes, the former NDP government essentially did away with the filibuster. I understand the frustration. I've sat over there, and you're right, there are more votes over on this side. One of the powers you have is to try to convince the government to change, so you can talk, you can do whatever you can to stop the government from doing something. The NDP government, of course, changed some of those rules. It may be argued that the filibuster should be brought back in; maybe it shouldn't.

In terms of this issue of the Speaker naming an individual, when an individual is named, what does it mean? "Go stand in the corner? Go leave the room?" No, it means they can no longer participate in this House and can no longer participate in a committee. And what does that mean? Well, it doesn't really mean much else. The only way it's going to affect the decorum in this House is through the pocketbook. I have received letters from the Speaker, as have all of you, from this Speaker, and former Speaker Warner tried to do the same thing, making an effort to control decorum in this House. None of that has worked. Nothing else has worked. The Speaker has made attempts to control the raucous behaviour that's gone on in this place. I don't think you're ever going to stop the remarks that go back and forth.

I can still remember one member over here last week saying, "Mr Speaker, you're a joke." How dare he say that? How dare he?

Mr Gerretsen: It's awful.

Mr Tilson: It is awful, as the member says. It is awful. We either have respect for each other or we don't, and quite obviously we don't.

This bill encourages respect for democracy. As members, we should all have respect for the democratic process. If we have no respect for the rules of this House and, by extension, the House itself, what are we doing here? Is it just going to turn into a shouting match? Do we not have any form of debate? You may say out of frustration: "I don't have an opportunity to speak. My caucus won't let me speak."

Mr Laughren: Oh, David.

Mr Tilson: The former Treasurer says that doesn't happen. We all know there are rules even among our own party, so out of frustration the only opportunity you have is to shout.

Mr Laughren: I can't believe that.

Mr Tilson: I know it's hard to believe, but it does indeed happen.

I submit that each member of this place is an elected official with the responsibility of representing his or her constituents in the assembly and it's his or her right to

bring forward the concerns of their constituents. Is the alternative anarchy? Is that the alternative? Different members of the Liberal and NDP caucuses have stood in their place and said, "We're going to oppose this." Is the alternative to allow the conduct that goes on in this place to continue? Is that what they're suggesting? Is that what their idea of democracy is, to continue to shout at each other? The name of the game, it seems, is to shout down whoever the speaker is. I'm not saying we're innocent; it happens on this side too. But is that what we're trying to do, to shout out the other person? If you don't like what he or she is saying, shout out them, call them names, and certainly don't have respect for the Speaker, because that's what you're saying with respect to the conduct going on in this place.

I have heard that we should be continuing to pay people. But if you've been kicked out of this place and you can't sit here and you can't sit in the committee, why are we paying members not to work? You're either working or you're not working. One of the members said, "I'll go back to my office and work." The problem is that it's called decorum, and the Speaker has made a decision to name someone. What does that mean? It doesn't mean anything. That's what it's become in this place. It doesn't mean anything to be named.

1050

I've seen people sit here and they'll look at the clock and they'll say: "It's 4 o'clock. Maybe I'll get named and create some grandstanding." I've actually seen a member on this side do that, look at the clock and then start to create and show disrespect for the Speaker, and the Speaker has no choice but to kick that person out.

It's unfortunate with the influence of the media, and the media must take some blame for this today, that members feel it necessary to grandstand to gain attention, and that happens. Instead of winning attention for their logical arguments, well-thought-out ideas—and I believe some of you have some well-thought-out ideas—they are often given attention for their tirades, their shouting, not their arguments, their debate, but their expertise in shouting.

Politicians today—

Mr Bisson: See the gallery. There's a member up there.

Mr Tilson: There's a member up there now, I suppose.

Politicians today are not held in the highest regard by the public, and it's unfortunate. One of the reasons is how they see we're conducting ourselves in this place. Unruly behaviour does absolutely nothing to elevate the status of politicians in the public's esteem. We are constantly in the public's eye with the advent of television, how these proceedings are televised, so we must be on our best behaviour at all times if we're to show any credibility with respect to the different positions, the different philosophies we have in this place. But the answer seems to be to shout. That seems to be the main argument today, that if you're not supporting this bill, you're advocating a form of anarchy, you're advocating shouting. Drown out the speaker. That's what you want to advocate.

I commend the member for Durham Centre for putting some real meaning into being named, the issue of the

Speaker naming someone for unruly conduct and not respecting each other or not respecting the Speaker. I encourage members to support this legislation. We cannot continue to act like unruly children. We must act as we should, that is the exercise of proper debate, and I encourage all of us in this place to support this legislation.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This legislation will contribute nothing to the decorum of this House and will contribute nothing to the cooperation between the various parties in this Legislature. You know, these new members come in, right-wing members come into this Legislature and say, "We're going to run this place like I'm running my business," in terms of the Legislative Assembly, and democracy be damned with you people.

It showed through very carefully when you had Bill 26 in the way you handled Bill 26; first of all, a huge bill which affected some 48 pieces of legislation. The member sits there with a smirk on his face. He should worry about the hospitals in his areas and not be worrying about pushing the opposition around, because that's what this bill is really about: a government with a huge majority wanting to push the opposition around and suggesting, for instance, if a member is not in this House, that the member isn't somehow carrying out a responsibility to the people that member represents. The member should know better than that.

I notice this did not come forward from the government House leader, because he knows only too well what this kind of legislation would do to the atmosphere at House leaders' meetings. The reason the House can work is because the House leaders of the three parties are able to sit down and agree upon a schedule of committees, for instance, agree upon a schedule of legislation before the House. There is disagreement from time to time, but that's why this place has worked over the years with Conservative House leaders, Liberal House leaders and NDP House leaders.

Then some member shows up in this House and says, "We'll start bullying the opposition around." Now your real members who appreciate this House and appreciate the role of the opposition will stand and oppose this. I don't know how many people you've been able to get on your side to agree with this legislation, but I'm sure the people who know the importance of the role of the opposition in this House—and you'll be in opposition some day, your party. It happens. I don't know when it will happen, but it does happen.

I can remember when my friends in the New Democratic Party changed the rules of the House. The member for Nickel Belt will recall, because he told me on that occasion he had not seen me so exercised in this House as when the government brought in that legislation. I opposed that legislation vehemently. I thought that severely restricted the opposition and what it could do. I think, upon reflection, many in the party, and perhaps even at the time, disagreed with that legislation, because in opposition they now see how you people on the other side will apply those rules.

If you care about democracy, you won't pass this. That's strictly a majority government trying to shove it at the opposition and the people of this province. That's

exactly what this bill does, and if you think that's going to enhance the atmosphere at the meetings of the House leaders, sir, you are wrong. I'll make sure that's wrong when you start pushing the opposition around again, just like Bill 26. You tried it, you have the people on the sidelines, the smart people of course, who advise, the unelected people, who say: "Oh, yes, we've got to have this. We've got to control the House. We know how to do it." That's exactly what this is about, a majority government trying to control the opposition. If you put this bill through, I tell you that you will not get any cooperation from other members of this House.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Thank you, Speaker. Did you think for a minute that I wouldn't want to talk to this bill? Boy, you could have bet your boots on it. Let me tell you, this is a pathetic and insincere and naïve bit of fluff. The reality is—look, at the end of the day, you know what? If a speaker is an ass, one has to say the speaker is an ass. One understands that you'll get passed out for the day, but somebody has got to stand up and say it. If the Minister of Education is lying when he talks about improving the quality of education at the same time as he slashes transfer payments so that teachers are put out on the street instead of into the classroom, somebody's got to stand up and say, "You're lying." It's imperative that that be done.

If the Premier stands up and says that the slashing and cutting of assistance to the poorest, to our children doesn't impact on families and force children into the custody of children's aid and generate child abuse and hunger and fill our hostels in an unprecedented way with children, somebody's got to stand up and say, "You're lying." It's imperative that that be done, and if it means you forfeit your right to participate in the Legislature for the balance of the day, God bless.

I'll go one further. If this bill passes, what it means is you'll forfeit one day's pay. Listen. Principles can't be bought and sold on this side of the House. This government proves that Ontario once again has the best politicians that money can buy. They're prepared to sit there like sheep, silent, warming their seats. You want to talk about decorum? Talk about what their role is in this Legislature as mere backbenchers. Pierre Trudeau, some time ago, said that once a backbencher is but 15 minutes away from Parliament Hill, he or she is a nobody. The fact is with this government, when they're sitting in their seats in the Legislature they're nobodies, because we know they don't make the policy. Tom Long and the Bay Street gang make the policy. The bond dealers make the policy.

We know these guys are here nodding their heads, following their marching orders, like little seals with the balls balanced on their noses, being whipped into shape in the most disgraceful way—not an ounce of guts or courage among the whole gang of them to stand up and speak out when they're the ones who should be standing up and saying to the Minister of Education that he's lying when he talks about quality in education but at the same time withdraws funding so that teachers are out at the soup lines instead of in the classrooms teaching. It should

be the Tory backbenchers standing up and telling the Premier he's lying when he says his savage cuts—all in the name of a tax break for the very wealthiest, for the rich of this province—his tax cuts aren't going to impact on our kids and on our poorest and on our sick and our parents and our grandparents.

What these folks don't understand, you see, they've never looked up and seen that there's an owl up there to remind the government to exercise wisdom. Unfortunately, the myopia present in the government benches has precluded them from ever seeing that owl. We look to the eagle, which encourages us to show courage and tenacity. This opposition has never been confronted with a more formidable challenge than the right-wing hacking, slashing, axing of this government and, by God, no bill is going to undermine the courage of this opposition.

1100

Mr Gerretsen: I concur with many of the comments that have been made earlier but I'd like to take a slightly different approach. There are 75 new members here and we all are concerned with what happens to school children and what have you when they come to this place, or when people watch this. The real problem with this bill is that it doesn't address the real issue here. The real issue here is how do we make the 110 people who are not in cabinet more part of the system, and I'm going to suggest something to you.

I'm going to suggest that you make a suggestion within your own caucuses, because you control the situation, whereby if a ministry wants to come up with a particular bill in a particular area, let it come up with some notions, some ideas, some legislative concepts, some general principles that it wants to employ; send it to a committee and have a committee of the Legislature, made up of a membership of all the parties here, come up with some drafts and actually go out and have meaningful public hearings, not on pieces of legislation that are already cast in stone, and then come up with something whereby we can all feel more part of the system. That's where the real problem lies. It's only if something like that happens, when we bring this institution into the 21st century, that you will see some real, meaningful changes here. What you've got here is plain motherhood.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham Centre, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Flaherty: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin began by saying he would not support the bill. He said we should be concerned that the standing orders, since they were changed, made misbehaviour more common in the House. The main standing order amendment was made in 1970. The list of reasons for suspension since then of the 68 members is: flouting the authority of the Speaker; refusing to stop speaking when asked; unparliamentary language; refusing to resume seat when asked to do so; and refusing to vote. With respect, sir, I don't think the people of Ontario consider that to be acceptable behaviour by those 68 members who have been suspended over that period of time.

The member for Cochrane South says that from 1990 to 1995 the Conservatives, in opposition, misbehaved a great deal. The actual numbers for 1990 are 10 Liberals suspended, eight NDP members, who were the govern-

ment at the time, and only seven Progressive Conservatives during this time when the member for Cochrane South says they were acting in such a disorderly manner in the House. His facts are wrong.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: You had a Speaker who recognized that the opposition needs to be allowed to oppose, bozo.

Mr Flaherty: The member for Hamilton East says this bill sets a limit on an opportunity to debate. What does debate have to do with gross misconduct in the House?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. If we were to abide to the topic being debated, perhaps members would be quiet.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: During the speech of the member for Durham Centre, the uproar in the House from the NDP member referring to the member as a bozo is a typical example of unparliamentary behaviour, and someone who from Rainy River is seeking the leadership is exemplary of misbehaviour that the member for Durham Centre is trying to address.

The Acting Speaker: Here's a typical example where when there's so much noise the Speaker can't hear. I didn't hear what he said. However, if the member has said a word which is insulting to the member for Durham Centre, I would ask him to apologize.

Mr Hampton: If I insulted the member for Durham Centre, I apologize, Speaker, but I find this bill quite offensive.

The Acting Speaker: Unfortunately, there's no time left. The time allotted for the first ballot item has expired.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995

SUR L'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr Sergio moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to provide for Fair Automobile Insurance Practices / Projet de loi 29, Loi visant à prévoir de justes pratiques en matière d'assurance-automobile.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i) the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'd like to speak on this particular bill and the heading of the bill practically says the whole thing. It is to bring fairness and equity to certain sections of the insurance system as we know it today, a system that penalizes good drivers, drivers that have had a gap in insurance, gaps for a period of time, or drivers who have had coverage under someone else's insurance policy.

Under our present insurance system, every driver is required to have insurance. There is a particular form of coverage where the uninsurable, if you will, drivers with a terrible record, cannot seek insurance under the normal system, normal ways, under normal rates, they have to seek coverage or insurance under the Facility term or Facility Association type of insurance as we call it. That is the form of insurance where people who cannot obtain insurance through any other form or under reduced rates have to seek insurance.

My two main points of the bill address inequities with respect to the Facility sections of our insurance system. The Facility insurance system was created with a mandate to insure solely the riskiest types of drivers, those for example who have had some serious major accidents, at-fault accidents, major traffic violations, or through Criminal Code offences.

In 1993, the insurance industry, in order to reduce the enormous amount of insureds through the Facility, created a risk point system, a risk point system which, by the way, did not necessitate the approval of the Legislature, the approval of this House. It was a system which was devised by the insurance industry, and was sought through the Ontario Insurance Commission and approval was obtained by the Ontario Insurance Commission.

In the spring of 1995, last year, the insurance industry said, "Well, we feel according to our own statistics that the majority of accidents are caused by new drivers, and therefore we have to amend the point risk system as they were introduced in 1993." Changes, amendments, again were sought without the approval of this House, and approval was given by the Ontario Insurance Commission last year in May.

1110

My bill addresses two particular concerns emanating from the risk point system. That has to do, as I said before, with drivers who have had a gap in coverage or drivers who have had coverage under someone else's insurance. This has nothing to do with insurance rates themselves; it's how drivers are rated. That's where my bill tries to address the inequity within the system as we know it today.

For example, if someone has been out of work for a period of time—a year, eight months, a year and a half or so—or has been out of the country for whatever reason, or does not have a car for a period of time, they should not be penalized. The way the system is at the moment, they are assessed if they cannot provide proof of coverage for 12 months during the last 24. They are automatically penalized, thrown into the risk point system, allotted four points and assessed through the Facility Association at a much higher premium.

The same goes for someone—it can be a member of your family, a daughter, a son, still going to school, going to college—perfectly okay to drive. It is not abnormal to have an 18-year-old, a 20-year old kid today—they're a kid no more at 18 or 20, but we call it such—driving to the family cottage or going on a vacation or going to work or picking up another member of the family to and from work, and having done so for a number of years. So what happens now that they may be joining the workforce? They're out of school. They may be buying their own car and they may be seeking to purchase their own insurance for the first time.

This is the other inequity the bill tries to address: If a driver has been driving with a good, clean record for a number of years under someone else's policy, he or she should not be assessed as a new driver. My bill is trying to address that particular point, that if someone has been covered, insured under someone else's policy with a good, clean record for a number of years, that record should be taken into account and he should not be

assessed the four-point system and be thrown into the Facility Association at a very high risk and a very high premium.

Lately, we have seen plenty of articles like this with horror stories about what's happening in the insurance industry.

The system provides for some flexibility, and the Ontario Insurance Commission recognizes that and agrees with that, but unfortunately that flexibility is not being used. So what happens? Too many people, being good drivers, too often are being penalized. These are some things I'm trying to address in this particular bill.

The third thing the bill is trying to do is to have, through the Ontario Insurance Commission, a review when some particular driver is being thrown into the Facility Association, to take another look, to correct the above inequities, perhaps through a hearing where the decision of the Ontario Insurance Commission would be final.

Also, it's a case where we are saying there is no particular system of education, neither for the drivers nor for the insurers out there. We have said we have to make the system more open and more easily understandable by those people seeking coverage.

I don't think it is fair that we can assess a particular driver who has had a speeding ticket through a school driving area or for failing to yield the same as someone who has received an offence under the Criminal Code. They would be treated similarly, the same, being thrown into the Facility Association, paying an enormous amount of money. I think this is quite unfair. As I said before, it does not deal with respect to lowering or raising rates; it deals solely with how we rate drivers, especially good drivers with good records.

I would hope, just ending my 10 minutes here, that especially the members of the government side can see the importance of this matter and hopefully go along with it, as this affects every ordinary resident or constituent of ours. I hope I have support on this particular bill, as it alleviates many problems for drivers throughout Ontario.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I'm going to be speaking to this matter, of course, and other members of this caucus are going to be speaking to this matter as well. I'm quite pleased that Mario Sergio of Yorkview has had the insight that has permitted him to bring this bill forward. I wish he had been here, though, as a member of the Peterson government when it rammed Bill 68 through the Legislature.

I used to, and quite accurately, indicate that the Peterson government was in bed with the auto insurance industry. Those guys, with Bill 68, were so deep in the back pockets of the insurance industry, they were spitting out lint. But then I realized, if they were in bed with the industry, it surely wasn't just a queen-sized bed, it was a king-sized bed. I voted against Bill 164, and I realized it wasn't just Peterson in bed, but it was in effect a *ménage à trois*. Now, after listening to the Tories' purported reform—reform, my foot—I realize, is there such a thing as a *ménage à quatre*? I suspect in some jurisdictions it's illegal. I'm not about to pass judgement on the morality of it, but I know that there are people here who could

indicate whether the morality sections of our Criminal Code permit or prohibit that type of enjoinder.

The insurance industry has been and remains the poor country cousin of the legitimate corporate world. The insurance industry has short arms and deep pockets. The insurance industry continues to abuse consumers, premium payers and indeed victims. Now that they've got a government that is so slavishly committed to doing their bidding, we are going to see an increase yet in the enormous profits enjoyed by the industry historically pursuant to Bill 68, which was like a dream come true. Bill 164, to be fair, in some respects tuned up the industry a little bit but certainly didn't propose the real response to this.

I know that the member for Yorkview, Mr Sergio, will be assisting the next government in implementing a public automobile insurance system here in the province of Ontario, recognizing that that's the real answer, that the private sector is as selfish and as greedy and as nasty and as underhanded and as abusive as any industry could ever be. They cry crocodile tears about the prospect of being put out of business by virtue of a public auto insurance system, the kind of system that Tommy Douglas introduced in Saskatchewan, that was emulated by New Democrats in Manitoba and then, of course, by Dave Barrett's government after his election in 1972 in British Columbia—the ICBC, surely the most successful of public auto insurance systems in Canada.

The real response is to take these guys, these Tories, out of the back pockets of that industry, haul them out of bed, at least pull the sheets back so that we know who's huddled there in that lumpy form on top of the king-sized mattress.

The government proposes, as I say, reforms. They indicated consultation. Well, with whom? With the insurance industry. Some consultation. Can you believe it? You see, what the insurance industry does historically is that they high-grade, they cherry-pick. Now, the real victims here are not just the consumers. Brokers, which this government has been totally oblivious to—there are insurance brokers in this province left with but one insurance company to sell product to their consumers. They're scared to death. They phone me and tell me, "Please don't identify me," because they know their business is all but gone, it's destroyed, should the public in their community, usually a small community, become aware that the broker handles only one insurance company. Because the insurance companies, the insurance industry, in their greed, in their outright selfishness, in their every intent to abuse the take-all-comers rule, have been using the brokers to do this cherry-picking, this high-grading.

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This government isn't responding to that. This government talks about supporting small business. When they talk about small business, that's what they mean: small business. They're not talking about brokers, one- and two-person brokerages; they're talking about big insurance companies. Now, what's going to be remarkable—because very soon we're going to have access to see who supported whom by way of the cash, the payola, the grease, during the period preceding the last election. Boy,

did I have—I couldn't say it was fun, but I took some great pleasure in seeing the huge sums of money that were pumped into Liberal coffers during the election of 1987.

You can bet your boots, you can bet your bottom dollar—Speaker, you can count on it, and I can see you're acknowledging that this is the case—that these guys, the Tories, have been paid off by this industry like no caucus ever has. I've never seen so many insurance brokers, ex-insurance people, in a given caucus. They knew something was coming down the line. They knew that payoff was there. The insurance industry uses Facility to high-grade. The fact is that Facility is poorly administered. The fact is that Facility—

Interjection: He just took a shot at you.

Mr Kormos: Did I take a shot at some Tories? You bet your boots I did. Lord love a duck. I wouldn't have not if my life had depended upon it. I would have done it even if I had to be thrown out for the balance of the day and forfeit my day's pay. It would have been worth it, let me tell you. It would have been money well spent. Because if anybody has to have a shot taken at them, it's these guys. You know it.

What an incredible abuse they've demonstrated, and a disdain for consumers in this province, a disdain for drivers, a disdain for innocent victims, a complete failure to meaningfully effect reform in the insurance industry.

What they propose to do is create yet the fourth regime for victims: pre-68, 68, 164, and now the no-name, generic bill, as of yet unnumbered. The real challenge, you see—because I had the pleasure of participating in the pre-bill hearings that Mr Sampson, as a banker type, led off as we purported to travel around the province. And I was pleased to have had the opportunity to pose questions. The problem is, the insurance industry, it isn't ad idem. They haven't got their act together themselves. You've got Royal Insurance saying one thing; you've got George Cooke—boy, George Cooke, Dominion of Canada. Has he been around the lot a few times. He started with the Liberals back when they were ramming the first piece of insurance garbage down the throats of consumers here in the province of Ontario and now ends up to be a well-paid—well, Dominion of Canada do not belong to the disclosure requirements of schedule A, but George Cooke is doing just fine. But these guys can't get their own act together.

It's about time we had some real, meaningful reform. This is a beginning. Drivers who are being punished, beat up on, skewered by the insurance industry need a chance to effect an appeal. I'm going to be supporting this bill; you can count on that.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): It's always a pleasure, and one that I've had numerous times since looking into auto insurance, to have an opportunity to speak to this particular topic, and more importantly to speak to this topic after the member for Welland-Thorold has spoken to the topic, because he continues to enlighten me on his views on auto insurance, frankly how they have changed over a period of time, as they have in the previous government, and I'll speak to that in a few minutes.

But I want to congratulate the member for Yorkview for bringing this very important topic to light, because it's something that I must say in the eight or so months of taking a look at auto insurance in Ontario I've seen come to light a number of times, and that is how one deals—how the industry, frankly, deals—under the structure that the government provides for auto insurance, with properly pricing the risks associated with drivers who have driving habits or previous driving habits that would demonstrate a higher propensity to get involved in an accident, because that's what they're doing when they assess the risk.

It's to a large degree—and the industry shudders a bit when I say this—a gambling process. They're on one side of the table saying, "I'm betting that you won't get involved in an accident," and you're on the other side saying, "Yes, but if I do, you had better be there to pay for the expenses." So the industry is given the tremendous challenge of trying to understand exactly what the propensity for one to get involved in an accident would be, and that's difficult to do.

I want to talk briefly to the risk point system, because despite of the meanderings of the member for Welland-Thorold on this subject, that's really what the purpose of this particular bill is: How does one deal with the risk point system? Really, if I can, the member's bill focuses on those particular drivers who have had lapses of coverage, so it's a very, very small component of the general higher risk category.

I want to make sure it's clear to the members in this House that the scheme put in place to deal with high-risk drivers was not one, as the member for Yorkview said, that was crafted by the industry. It was a response by the industry to government's pressure to deal with the fact that there was about 5% of the driving population of this province in the high-risk driving category, in the category that had generally very high premiums.

By the way, 5% in North America is way below average. If you were asked the question, "How many of the driving population do you think are truly high-risk drivers?" I would say that generally people would come back and say 5% is a fairly low number. But the previous government, under the pressures to deal with rate increases, went to the industry and said: "Five per cent is too high. Get that number down." They were told to depopulate the high-risk pool, as it's called.

How did they do that? Well, they created another system called the risk sharing pool, which I suspect some of the viewers today may be in but don't know it. And why don't they know it? Because they've been assessed as having high-risk driving behaviour but they're paying regular rates. You and I and most of the people watching on TV today are subsidizing people who have truly bad driving habits. That's wrong. That's what the previous government said was the solution to the high-risk driving problem, and that's not the way to proceed.

As I listened to Ontarians when we took our draft legislation across Ontario, many Ontarians came to me and said, "If somebody is truly a high-risk driver, they should pay the higher premium, no question." There was absolutely no question about that in many of the views of Ontarians I spoke to.

So while I would agree with the member's intention on this bill, that it's important to be able to get the high-risk drivers into that category and not people who really don't have high-risk driving experience, I must disagree with the methodology under which he's trying to achieve that objective.

I want to speak to the general problem as to why the methodology is wrong. I think, with due respect to the member, that what he's trying to do is treat the symptom and not the fundamental disease.

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The fundamental disease in auto insurance in Ontario is that we have a bill called Bill 164, commonly called a no-fault plan, and the name "no-fault" is the biggest misnomer I have ever seen in any bill. This bill should have been called "everybody's at fault" because everybody pays for the high-risk driving characteristics and the accidents of those at fault. Everybody in the risk pool pays. You, I, the people on TV watching today pay for people who get involved in accidents—some of them on purpose, by the way. That's wrong and that's what we've tried to fix with our draft legislation, and we're hoping to be able to make modifications on that draft legislation and bring them to the House to deal with the fundamental problem in auto insurance: the product design. We can deal with the symptoms but that's not the solution; it won't solve the problem.

What we have today is an auto insurance plan that the industry does not want to aggressively write in Ontario. The member for Welland-Thorold spoke very eloquently about some brokers who have only what's called one market left. Now a market is basically an insurance company to send clients to, the insurance company to write the business. And you're right. He's right. Some brokers do only have one market. That market is the Facility market. Why? Because companies don't want to write in Ontario. They don't want to write auto insurance, they don't want to underwrite auto insurance in this province, because it's too expensive to guess wrong.

Lotto 164 is not an auto product; it's an entitlement product. If we want an entitlement product in this province, it's going to cost a lot of money, rates are going to go up year over year, and that in fact is what we have seen under the regime of 164 in Ontario. It's the wrong principle for insurance. It's not working, it won't work and needs to be fixed, and we will fix it.

Before I close, I want to say that the other reason I must vote against this particular legislation is that it encourages the Ontario Insurance Commission to get into the business of auto insurance. It's one small step towards the end objective that my friend from Welland-Thorold would love to see, which is public auto. I'll tell you, if the previous government's capabilities in dealing with public disability insurance, as demonstrated by the Workers' Compensation Board experience, is an example of how they think public auto would work, I don't want it and neither does the rest of Ontario, because we're not going to pay through the nose for a system that is an entitlement system, not a true auto insurance product.

Ontarians need a solution to the problems of auto insurance. We will deliver that. That solution is not further red tape, that solution is not one more step

towards public auto, and that solution is not dealing with the symptom; that solution is dealing with the fundamental problem of auto insurance. There needs to be a fundamental redesign. We need to return auto insurance to a program of, "What was your loss? Here is your recovery," not, "What have I been entitled to as a result of the accident?"

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Mr Speaker, the previous speaker almost lulled me to sleep, but I have a great deal more respect for him than that.

When I first came to this Legislature a couple of years ago, a number of people asked me why I would ever consider going into politics full time. Notwithstanding what's gone on this morning, I told them because I was in the brokerage business, that it's better than being an insurance broker, because these are difficult times when it comes to auto insurance. Governments have tried to solve these problems and are continuing to do so.

This morning I want to take my few minutes not necessarily to talk about the insurance companies' problems, and I don't want to talk about those who have bad driving records and who deserve to be in the Facility Association. Many of them have suspended licences. They don't deserve to drive at all. I want to talk about those people who are caught between a rock and a hard place. They have outstanding driving records. Many of them have come to me both since I've been a member and previously, when I was in the insurance business, to say, "I've been a good driver for 30 years and now they're treating me not only like a new driver, but they're treating me like a driver who has a bad record."

That's what this bill addresses. The government will tell us it doesn't solve the problem. Rarely do we ever have legislation that solves all the problem, but while we're taking time to do that, there are a number of people in this province with good driving records but it so happens that for various reasons—some being out of the country serving our country, who come back—they're treated like a new driver or a bad driver.

Certainly in this pamphlet that's given out, You're in the Driver's Seat—I think it's misnamed. I don't know who's in the driver's seat, but certainly the insured of the province of Ontario are not in the driver's seat these days. It says at the outset on this, "In Ontario, the Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act guarantees that all owners and drivers of automobiles can obtain the insurance they're required to carry by law." What it doesn't say is that you're able to get insurance at fair and reasonable cost. I think it should.

In this case, this private member's bill I want to support maybe is an interim solution, but let's address these one at a time, and what's the harm if we pass it and we help some of these people?

A driving record can be checked through the MTO and if a person has driving offences during that lapsed period of time, then that should be taken into consideration and perhaps they should be in the Facility Association, but if there's no evidence they have a poor driving record, I think it's incumbent upon the insurance companies to take some of that risk they're being paid for and give the intended insured the benefit of the doubt.

The other problem that's created is that there are a number of brokers in this province who don't have standard insurers in their portfolios. It may be only the Facility Association they can go to. Frankly, they neglect to tell these intended insureds that there are other options and that they can go to other insurers or other brokers. I think that's a problem we have to address.

But here we're talking about a group of people who, as I said at the outset, are between a rock and a hard place. Let's give them the benefit of the doubt while we're taking time to try and solve the whole question. I certainly think this bill is good in its intention. It goes one step towards solving the problem we have and I would ask that the government consider supporting it.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I will say up front that I will support this bill because I too believe it is a step in the right direction. I agree with many of the speakers prior that there are a number of difficulties in the automobile insurance sector. I certainly would like to see a lot of them fixed, but I support any step we can take forward in the right direction to assist some of those people out there who, quite frankly, are really put behind the eight ball because of the present rules on the Facility Association.

I just want to say a couple of things in passing really quickly about that. The reality is that the insurance companies in this province have a monopoly. They have a private sector monopoly by which they control how much we're going to pay for our insurance in this province.

Yes, there's competition and members will say that if I don't like the rate I can go from one company to the other broker to get a bid on another one, but the reality is it doesn't work that way. They're in collusion. They get together. They stick together to decide how much it is that a driver's going to pay for automobile insurance, and if you find yourself unfortunate enough to be in a situation where you might have a couple of demerit points on your licence because of a traffic violation, or you allowed your automobile insurance to lapse, when you go shopping from one company to another the insurance company says, "This is what you pay," and that's what everybody else has been asked to get.

1140

I don't know how many people I've had in the riding of Cochrane South, from Matheson to Iroquois Falls to Timmins, who come to me and say: "Gilles, I was paying \$550 a year for my automobile insurance last year. I ended up with a traffic violation where I got three demerit points and my automobile insurance has gone up to \$1,900." That's a real, real shame.

It's not only because of the question of the Facility Association. There's the other issue that I think we need to deal with at one point, which is the question of surcharge. I was speaking to Lorraine in my riding just the other week on this very issue. She was driving down Algonquin Boulevard, turned left and happened to get into a fender-bender. There were no claims to the automobile insurance companies because it was a minor accident, but she was charged. She decided not to fight the ticket at the time because she felt: "What the heck?

There's been no cost. It was not a big thing. I'm just going to pay the ticket and I'm not going to worry about it any more."

Her automobile insurance came due, I think it was on February 1. Because she was trying to pull the money together—like lots of working people, she didn't have the bucks to pay, or for whatever reason—she allowed it to lapse for three weeks. She went from \$550 a year to \$1,900. I think that is thievery, quite frankly. That is a darned shame. Then the government stands here and says, "We're going to fix automobile insurance." I really wonder if people like Lorraine are going to be properly served. I will support what the member is doing because I believe that in Lorraine's case she should have the ability to appeal. Right now, she doesn't.

I can appeal a decision when it comes to benefits, but I cannot appeal a decision when it comes to me, as a driver, being put into the Facility Association, or I cannot appeal if an insurance company wants to put a surcharge on my automobile insurance. I wish that would have been added into the resolution, but I support it anyway because you're going in the right direction.

This is a most unfair system of automobile insurance that we have. One regret I have, and I say it freely, is that I wish, as a government, when we were in power, we would have had the \$2.5 billion that was necessary to set up driver-owned automobile insurance. I disagree with the government member who says, "We should not pool the rates so that we have a rate where everybody sort of subsidizes each other, so on average we have a lesser cost of automobile insurance to the driver." He argues the old adage of the Tory party: "I'm all right, Jack. Everything's fine for me and if I have a good driving record, I don't want to carry anybody else on my back."

The reality is, where you've got driver-owned automobile insurance, in provinces like Manitoba and Saskatchewan and British Columbia, they pay far less for automobile insurance than we do in the province of Ontario. I was talking to one of the members just a little while ago who says his daughter lives in Manitoba and is paying a little bit less than half of what she was paying when she was living in Ontario for the same coverage on automobile insurance. The reason is that system pools the risk among everybody, but also it takes out the competition you have between the entire private sector, where they're all competing against each other for the same customers. Time for another debate. We will come to that at one point. I wish we would have had the \$2.5 billion that was necessary to set up driver automobile insurance. If there's anything I regret in our term in government, it's probably that one.

But I say allow people the opportunity to appeal the decision when an insurance company says, "I'm going to stick it to you," and you don't have a say about trying to do anything. What ends up happening is that, like Lorraine, you go cap in hand like a beggar from insurance company to insurance company and you say, "Please, Mr Broker," or "Please, Mrs Insurance Company, can you give me a better rate than the \$1,900 you want to give me?" There's absolutely nothing Lorraine can do.

The cost of that is, I don't think Lorraine's going to be able to buy automobile insurance for the next year. Where does that leave her? She needs her car to get to work and to do the kinds of things we all do when it comes to transportation, especially in northern Ontario where you have to travel vast distances. She is, quite frankly, held for hostage. Either she's going to have to go to the bank and work out a payment arrangement with the insurance company or she'll be stuck. At least if she had the ability to say, "I want to appeal the decision of the automobile insurance company to the Insurance Commission on both the Facility Association issue"—and I wish you would have added the whole question of the surcharges—maybe Lorraine would get some justice. I support this bill on that premise.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I rise today to recognize the member for Yorkview and Bill 29. On reading it, without having a great deal of insurance background, it appealed to me. I must admit that right from the beginning. It addressed the problem of a person's ability to question, through his broker, why his insurance has doubled.

In my constituency a couple of students who were studying overseas or were away, people who were in the armed services, and indeed single parents who because of changes in their lifestyle had come back into the insurance business found that their insurance was unaffordable, which meant the ability to get to school or to a job was impaired. So I had a great deal early on in my duty representing those people, finding out that it was because of this Facility Association clause that they had been dropped into this group and their premiums were subsequently changed to a higher level.

The member for Mississauga West addressed what I believe to be really most important as the root cause. The real high-risk drivers, those charged with impaired or other types of traffic offences, should pay the real cost of insurance. One of the problems with Bill 164—it was broken. Our government recognized that. We put Mr Sampson on the job. I have a great deal of faith that in his interim report we will address the problem. With all sympathy, I support the sentiments of the member for Yorkview, but I'm still listening to the full debate.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm pleased to stand today in support of the bill that my colleague is forwarding regarding auto insurance. I think if any of us in the House has a look at our files back in our constituency office, when we look at the one issue we might get calls about that relates to auto insurance, this is indeed the issue. If some of the members who will hopefully assist in passing this bill today were to document the calls you get in your offices back home, you would see that this issue is probably the most prevalent. It's time that we address and say to our own people back home that the people in the House here at Queen's Park are listening. I'm very pleased that my colleague has come forward with this kind of resolution today to address that.

I want to tell you about an individual from my riding. His name is George Drew. It's the perfect case example, where in 1991 he was paying an insurance rate of \$800, and almost overnight, after a lapse that didn't have anything to do with a driving record, his insurance

suddenly went to \$2,000. There are numerous cases like this that exist.

Now, in speaking to people who are in the insurance industry, what they do tell me, and I'm sure they've told the government members in charge of the report they've been drafting, is that the number of people who are in FARM, the Facility Association Residual Market, or in that facility bracket, has decreased dramatically. Nevertheless there is still an inherent unfairness in the system where individuals, for a variety of reasons, choose not to drive and therefore choose not to pay their insurance, and when they come back into the system, they find that all of a sudden they've been elevated and are paying huge amounts regardless of age, regardless of any change in the status of the driver. That is what is being addressed by this bill. Because of that, I think it's incumbent on all of us to support something that really will right the fairness of this issue.

When I talk to people at home, I've got about 1,200 people currently who are still interested in the issue of auto insurance. I remember clearly campaigning across my riding. When I'd ask them what really bothers them about government, it was that we have failed to address issues that mean ordinary people paying huge levels of fees for auto insurance.

When you get cases that are not fair, I think it's incumbent on us to change that. When the government member introduced the report, we were hoping this would have been addressed, but the reality is that it has not been addressed in the draft forms that we saw, and it should have been. Regardless of what the government members are going to do today with this bill, at least we think that by our pointing it out through this private member's bill you're going to have a revision and you will include it.

Indeed, even the insurance industry recognizes that they come upon cases that really are not fair for the drivers, whether it's people who go on sabbatical out of town for years at a time or a year at a time, or people who move to Toronto who decide a car isn't practical and then move back and need a car. Nothing in their driver status has changed and yet they're thrown into such enormous rate levels that it becomes unaffordable. I think we owe it to people.

Even the previous government sought to bring in a kind of system that would improve auto insurance, but they saw that their system simply wasn't practical day to day. Finally we have a member who is choosing to address this. Finally we have a member who even will allow an appeal process for people. There's a frustration for me and my staff, in working on these cases for the people in my riding—we can call the Ontario Insurance Commission, we can call the companies, and at the end of the day they have their policies. At the end of it all they say that all companies have lapse-of-insurance clauses. I think that's where we have to step in and say, "Let's make it fair for people and let people have a place to go to correct it."

I applaud my member, and we want this bill to pass.
1150

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? You have 17 seconds.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I thank you very kindly. So much to say about what's in front of us, yet so

little time to do so. Members of our caucus, independent as always, will vote with their conscience. Having examined the written word, I for one will vote to support the bill.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I would like to commend the member for Yorkview because I know that he has very commendable intentions with this bill. I will not defend the insurance companies' actions over the last number of years because I know there have been many actions which haven't been commendable on their part. However, I think what we have to look at here is why the factor exists that the member is trying to address: the interruption factor.

Why is someone forced to pay more because they don't have insurance for the previous year? It's not a penalty for lack of coverage. It is a lack of verifiable proof of coverage. That means there is no claims record, and that is the reason for that interruption factor in the insurance.

Also, it is not normal practice for insurance companies to treat an applicant as a new driver if that driver was listed as an occasional operator on another person's policy.

Mr Pouliot: Are you a broker? You're in conflict.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, to the honourable member, I was an insurance broker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Nipigon and the member for Welland-Thorold. I want to remind the members that when the Speaker rises, you take your seat.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The problem with the insurance product today is what is causing the insurance companies' actions. We want to introduce an insurance product so that insurance companies want to write automobile insurance. We want to introduce an insurance product that insurance companies will compete for, something they are not doing now. We want to introduce an insurance product that the market will assess.

We don't want a product like OMPP that the Liberals had, whereby so many people were suffering. Independent, self-employed business people were not receiving proper coverage. Students were not receiving, were not eligible for proper coverage. Bill 164 was treated as cash for life by the average claimant. We cannot have a product like that any more.

We must introduce a product. That was the purpose of the public hearings we held for the last two weeks of February: to find out what problems the public was experiencing with the existing product.

I can assure you we heard all kinds of horror stories from claimants, from people who had been injured while the other two plans were in existence, Bill 164 and OMPP, and the stories we heard were only the tip of the iceberg. I can assure you, from my history in the insurance industry, all kinds of people out there have not been treated properly.

What we have to do is reach a compromise. We have to introduce a compromise product that the public will want to pay for what they also have to have. The insurance companies will provide a product which will be reasonably affordable.

Mr Kormos: You took a drop in pay when you came here, huh?

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes I did, as a matter of fact.

The member for Welland-Thorold talks about government plans. What about that \$185-million fiasco ICBC had?

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I stand in support of this bill. We've heard from the member for Kitchener what the insurance industry wants, but let's address for a second what the member, Mr Sergio, wants. All Mr Sergio wants is fairness for the public. He's only picking two aspects which aren't covered in the draft legislation and he wants fairness attached to them. As the member for Windsor-Sandwich stated earlier, your offices, as mine, have received numerous phone calls and letters with regard to fairness in auto insurance reform.

Let me just read part of a letter that was sent to Mr Sampson by Mr Arthur Slade, a constituent of mine. Although it doesn't deal with this, it deals with fairness, and that's what's important here. We must deal with fairness.

"Dear Sir,

"According to my insurance agent, I must have accident benefits coverage, at a cost of about \$250/year, on each of my vehicles, even though I only drive one at a time. My wife does not drive, so 99.9% of the time, one of the vehicles is parked. I drive a combined distance of 25,000 kilometres/year, but it would be the same if I only had one vehicle. My second vehicle (the half-ton truck) may be used three or four times per year...but for those hours I should not be charged the cost of annual coverage."

He goes on to state the unfairness of this and asks Mr Sampson to be fair in his perusal of this letter and in his response. The key word is "fairness." We must be fair. What the mover of this bill is simply asking is that if someone has to lapse coverage for whatever reason, and that's going to increase more and more—as the government puts more Ontarians out of work starting today, these gaps are going to occur more frequently. All that the mover of this bill is asking is that when the person can afford it or when he can find a job or when he's able to be insured again, he is treated fairly.

The second part of his bill is very straightforward and simple. He wants fairness for good drivers; he wants fairness for good young drivers. He feels, and I support this, that people who are considered occasional drivers should not be punished because they are being covered by someone else. Their good, their excellent, their above-average driving record must be considered when they have to pay the premium. That's all Mr Sergio is asking. Indeed, it's simple.

This bill deals with items that are not dealt with in the draft legislation. It's important for every member of this House to understand that this is not covered in the draft legislation, therefore it is important that in this draft legislation it be treated fairly. If we support this bill we are supporting fairness. In these two instances it is not out of line, it is not wacko; it makes great common sense because it's fair.

1200

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I too join in the debate on this and would like to congratulate the member for Yorkview for bringing this matter forward. What is very interesting about this whole situation is that here we are at private members' time, when presumably partisanship is out the door, looking at real problems that people are facing on a day-to-day basis. The problems we've heard about from the member for Windsor and the member for Sudbury and Mr Sergio himself earlier are real problems that people are facing on a day-to-day basis.

I realize that this whole car insurance situation and problem have been with us for many years. I realize that the committee is working hard on it and the parliamentary assistant is working hard on it. This certainly doesn't answer all the problems he's dealing with. This is only part of the total situation as it relates to car insurance. But the point is, this is a start. This is a start to bring fairness to the situation and this is a start whereby at least the people of Ontario who are mainly affected—and I hear it's only about 5% of the people—will actually get some justice done.

I hope the backbenchers here on the government side, and particularly the member for Durham East, who spoke quite eloquently, can convince some of the other members to vote for this on a purely non-partisan basis, so at least there can be some justice done for the people who aren't properly protected at the present time.

I urge each and every member in this House, even the member for Wellington, who told his own Premier that he was reckless in trying to implement a tax cut—this is once again an opportunity for him to show some independence and some real courage. Vote for this bill. I know the taxpayers of the province of Ontario who will be affected by this legislation will thank you for it.

The Acting Speaker: You have two minutes to reply, Mr Sergio.

Mr Sergio: I'm quite pleased to take the two minutes and respond to some of the previous speakers. I'm quite pleased, as a matter of fact, to hear that the members for Mississauga West and Kitchener are pleased with the intent of this proposed bill. What surprises me and makes me unhappy is to hear the version that, on a matter of principle, because it does not solve all the problems, they cannot support it.

Let me tell the members of this House, and especially the members of the government, that if there is one particular person in your constituency, in your riding, a member of a family in your own constituency who would benefit from the approval of this bill, then you have done your job and this bill has done its job.

I'm very disappointed to hear, especially from the member who has been conducting a study on improving the insurance system, that he agrees with the intent of this bill and he doesn't even give a chance to bring it forward, to discuss it further, to make better even what he is proposing, which by the way does not bring any solution.

The insurance companies themselves said that insurance premiums will skyrocket by as much as 40%. My bill has tried to bring equity and fairness to the system.

It does not deal with insurance premiums. I'm not speaking on behalf of the insurance companies; I'm speaking on behalf of every constituent in your ridings. I appeal to your good common sense to bring some solutions to a specific problem. I do not intend to address all the problems. I'm trying to address a specific problem that affects a large number of our constituents. I hope they will see the common sense that is applied to this bill and I can have their support.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will deal first with the ballot item standing in the name of Mr Flaherty. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Pursuant to standing order 96(e), the following members signified their objection to the putting of the question on the motion and accordingly the motion was not put:

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Laughren, Floyd
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Martin, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, Elinor	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wood, Len
Cooke, David S.	Lankin, Frances	

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995

SUR L'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 20, standing in the name of Mr Sergio.

If any members are opposed to vote on this ballot, will they please rise.

Mr Sergio has moved second reading of Bill 29, An Act to provide for Fair Automobile Insurance Practices. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a five-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1206 to 1211.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances
Bartolucci, Rick	Cooke, David S.	Laughren, Floyd
Bisson, Gilles	Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony

Boyd, Marion	Crozier, Bruce	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	O'Toole, John
Caplan, Elinor	Grandmaître, Bernard	Pouliot, Gilles
Castrilli, Annamarie	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Wood, Len
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Ross, Lillian
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Shea, Derwyn
Boushy, Dave	Johns, Helen	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Bert	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan	Turnbull, David
Ford, Douglas B.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Fox, Gary	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Froese, Tom	Pettit, Trevor	
Galt, Doug	Preston, Peter	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The yeses are 32, the nays 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' business have been completed. I will now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1214 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): When the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation tabled Bill 8, the act to repeal employment equity legislation, she said, "We will reform the Ontario Human Rights Commission to ensure that it fulfils its mandate to help victims of discrimination more effectively and more efficiently."

What has the minister done to reform the OHRC since passing Bill 8 into law last September? Nothing. There is widespread speculation that major cuts will take place at the Ontario Human Rights Commission. I understand that several hundred thousand dollars will be slashed from the budget of the commission.

I was surprised to hear this because I have a Progressive Conservative Party media release dated May 5, 1995, that states, "A Mike Harris government will reinforce the Human Rights Commission by using money redirected from the \$9.3 million that will not be spent due to the cancellation of the Employment Equity Commission." The minister clearly has not kept her promise and she has not acted on this commitment. I urge the minister to act.

I have not seen any indication that she represents those people who are most discriminated against and have been

subjected to many, many alienations in our society. When is this minister going to become the minister for human rights and stand up for the principles of those people who need protection most in our society?

I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY CONFERENCE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm happy today to be able to tell the Legislature and the people of Ontario about a conference that's going to be held this weekend in London at the London Convention Centre. It's an important conference. It's only the second year that it has been held. It's called I Have Something to Say. It is a symposium around the technology that is available to disabled people and their families to enable them to communicate and to be part of life.

This is an important occasion for people to look at the way in which technology can help people to become part of their community, access education and be more productive and more effective in their feelings about themselves.

Just two of the people who participated last year told their story in the London Free Press this morning, one an eight-year-old girl whose parents were told she could never go to school, who now with the aid of technology, a laptop computer and its software, has been integrated successfully into Ekcoe Central Public School in Glencoe. Another woman, Janice Janes of London, who has for 25 years experienced gradual deterioration in her ability to function physically because of multiple sclerosis, talks about the change in her life by being able to use the software and programs that she learned about at the conference last year.

I hope that people will attend this conference. It gives hope to those who are disabled and to their family and friends.

CONTROL OF SMOKING

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): We in Ontario must continue to do all that we can to discourage smoking, especially among our young people.

In recent years, all levels of government have taken steps to discourage tobacco use, but if the past is a guide, this year in Ontario alone, 13,500 people will die as a direct result of smoking.

Clearly, more needs to be done. Today and in the future we must continue to be vigilant on this issue. Here are some ideas we should consider:

We could take further action to ensure that Ontario workplaces are smoke-free. If possible, the use of smoking areas which are separately ventilated might be a solution for some workplaces.

The federal government could show leadership by gradually reintroducing tobacco taxes. Low tobacco prices have been linked to increases in smoking rates. Among young people aged 15 to 19, smoking rates have increased an average of 9% from 1994 to 1995.

We could put a 1-800 number on all cigarette packages, which would direct smokers who want to quit towards the help they need.

We could enhance enforcement of the laws which prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors.

We could strengthen public education programs in our schools.

I strongly urge the government to review these suggestions so that we can take every step possible to discourage young people from starting to smoke.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I want to read a couple of quotes: "Not one nickel will be cut from agriculture," and "No cuts to agriculture." These statements were made by Mike Harris and were repeated often by Tory candidates throughout the election.

Well, there is obviously no election on now. Twenty-six million dollars have already been cut and the minister has told groups to expect a further 35% cut to the ministry.

Agriculture and the food and beverage industry are second only to the auto industry in importance for the economy of Ontario. Although agriculture has a farm-gate value of \$6.2 billion, it receives only one half of one per cent of provincial spending, and now this government wishes to further this unwarranted assault on the agricultural industry.

I say to this government, shame on you for breaking your promise, and shame on you for attacking such a vital part of our economic future. I urge the government to honour its commitment and ensure that agriculture will regain its fair share of provincial spending.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): For the second time in this government's mandate—the Tories sitting across—there's been a direct attack on people with disabilities. Now the Minister of Municipal Affairs is proposing the elimination of building code requirements for barrier-free access, his philosophy being that barrier-free access is a regulatory burden on builders. Imagine.

This type of thinking is regressive and will trap individuals in their own homes, literally cutting them off from mainstream society. Any move this government makes to allow builders or developers to opt out makes the builders' and developers' role in society less reflective of the need of the marginalized and the most disabled, the people who need access the most.

In my great riding of Lake Nipigon, incidentally the largest riding geographically in the province, it is paramount that people who are physically challenged have access and can be able to take for granted what people in other parts of Ontario indeed do on a daily basis.

I urge the government to reconsider and not take us back to the Dark Ages, to involve what is at stake here, the essence of life and the human dimension.

EASTER ACTIVITIES

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I rise to call to the attention of all members of the House that while many Canadians celebrated Easter last weekend, others who are members of the Eastern churches will observe this holiday this coming weekend.

Canadians of Ukrainian, Greek, Russian, Arabic, Ethiopian and other backgrounds bring their own colourful traditions to bear on a truly enriching, multicultural celebration of Easter.

Such fidelity to enduring and meaningful Easter traditions especially characterizes the Ukrainian community in my riding of High Park-Swansea. The Ukrainian experience of Easter is one which stands in awe of nature's cycles. It is also one which deeply appreciates, in political and national terms, the spiritual meaning of the resurrection theme. Following years of harsh oppression under the Soviet Russian regime, Ukraine underwent the suffering of its national crucifixion with patience and trust in divine providence.

The trust was finally rewarded on August 24, 1991, with the proclamation of a free and independent state, the joyous culmination of the testament of Ukraine's greatest poet, Taras Shevchenko, "Fear not, for the grave shall collapse and from underneath shall rise Ukraine—and the children of slaves shall pray in freedom!"

On the great day of Christ's resurrection, I wish all Eastern Christians and my entire Ukrainian community in particular a happy and joyous Easter. I join with them in celebrating this great feast according to their beautiful rites and customs which are today the proud multicultural heritage of all Canadians. *Krestos voskres.*

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Later today thousands of our fellow citizens will find out that they no longer have a job. While most employers describe this experience, the experience of letting someone go, as the hardest thing they've ever had to do, this employer, the employer that will let these people go today, has had the unmitigated gall to celebrate.

The Premier himself today called this a happy day. How callous and insensitive can the Premier be towards the government's employees? The utter disdain for the lives of these people is amazing. The cold-hearted indifference to their families is astounding. On behalf of those families, thousands of families and thousands of individuals whose financial situation is about to be turned upside down, I say that gloating in the face of their personal tragedy is in bad taste.

Many people are describing this government as cold-hearted and cruel. What they've done to welfare recipients, what they've said, bears this out. Today, the Premier's lack of decency, his inability to be sensitive to those individuals and families, proves that the charges of callousness are right. Shame on all of you.

1340

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I want to talk about some very serious things that have been going on down in Niagara south. You know that 218 teachers from the Niagara south public board got their pink slips. They're not going to be teaching come September. They're not going to be in the classrooms there for the young people of Niagara south who are eager to get the

sort of education their folks and grandfolks figured they'd be able to provide to those same young people.

I met with four of these young people because they're concerned, their families are concerned and worried. I met with Jennifer Barren and Jamie Treschak and Wesley Abell and Jami Langille, four of the leaders of a growing student movement that is going to fight and protest these unconscionable cuts by a government that simply doesn't give a tinker's dam about education. They picketed outside the Niagara South Board of Education office on Wednesday and they're going to be there, as am I with them, on April 16, when they address the Niagara South Board of Education at the public meeting.

I've also told those young people to bring their classmates, hundreds of them, bring them right into Queen's Park, because we'll fill these galleries and Minister Snobelen can, if he dares, look them in the eye and tell them why he's destroying their public education system and their future and the future of this province.

JOSEPH HOWE SENIOR PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On March 29, the Ontario Science Olympiad was held at Centennial College in Scarborough. Schools from across the province were grouped according to their type of school. Joseph Howe Senior Public School, which I am proud to say is in our riding of Scarborough East, won for the intermediate level.

Daryl McCrossan, the grade 7 science teacher, had initially involved the students in Sir John A. Macdonald Collegiate's olympiad, held earlier that year. Teams of 10 students from Howe won this event, which entitled them to participate at the provincial level.

The Ontario Science Olympiad was divided into 15 events requiring a variety of skills. Students from Howe took five first-place and five second-place medals out of the 15 events. Members of the team and Mr McCrossan indicated that they have an abundance of the most important skill, the ability to work cooperatively.

The next step for this team is Atlanta, Georgia. On May 17 and 18, they'll be representing Ontario and possibly Canada in the National Science Olympiad. They'll compete against state teams from across the United States. The immediate hurdle for the team is to raise funds to cover the cost of transportation and accommodation, but I'm sure that Scarborough East residents will help them in that goal.

I'm very pleased to stand before the Legislature today and congratulate the students and staff at Joseph Howe Senior Public School for achieving this great milestone. Understanding science at a young age is crucial to the nurturing of tomorrow's scientists, who will lead Ontario and Canada into a new age of research and technology.

REPORT, COMMISSION ON ELECTION FINANCES

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the Nineteenth Indemnity and Allowances Report of the Commission on Election Finances.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Shile Develara, county Clare, member of Parliament from Ireland. Welcome to the Parliament.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE RESTRUCTURING

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Today I wish to inform the members of this House of the government's progress towards changing the way the government of Ontario works by doing better for less.

Restructuring government is good for taxpayers and good for the people of Ontario. Doing better for less in government is a key part of our five-point plan to reduce costs, balance our budget, create jobs and restore hope and opportunities for current and future generations.

Last July we put the brakes on runaway spending. In November we outlined cost savings targets for ministries to achieve. We are meeting these targets and changing the way government operates by developing and implementing ministry business plans that are thorough and fair. Our business plans establish the core services that ministries should and can deliver over the next two years. They will incorporate results-based performance measurements to allow taxpayers to determine the effectiveness of these core programs and services.

As a general direction, we've confirmed our commitment to continuing the provincial government's role of setting standards and policy and ensuring these are enforced. However, we are moving out of direct delivery of services that can be done better by others. We are matching fees for services to their real costs and fostering self-reliance and more efficient use of taxpayers' dollars.

There has not been a restructuring of the provincial government on this scale for more than two decades and it's long overdue, as the deficit numbers bear out. Doing better for less is a work in progress and we want Ontarians to participate. Ministers and ministry staff will be sharing these new business directions with Ontarians who want to take part in reshaping their government. We are building a better government, one that provides the service taxpayers need at a price the taxpayers can afford by getting rid of waste and duplication.

Today I am providing the members of this House and the people of Ontario with a detailed progress report on what we have accomplished. This report shows that we are determined to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely and outlines many examples of how we are doing this.

For instance, we are streamlining provincial involvement in land use planning approvals. There are currently half a dozen ministries which comment on official plan amendments and other planning proposals. This is a matter of routine more than necessity. Each ministry has staff devoted to land use planning issues. We're putting that responsibility for this activity where the planning

experts are: in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, which will play the lead role in coordinating the provincial response.

The Ontario Provincial Police is another good example of what we're working towards. The OPP is cutting management layers from seven to four, reducing administrative centres by half and streamlining their dispatch system, closing three of 16 communications centres and reconfiguring the rest. The OPP is providing better service at less cost while protecting front-line policing.

Another example of streamlining is the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. The ministry is simplifying its fee structure in the area of technical standards, taking the 270 separate fees it currently charges and cutting those down to about 60.

Doing better for less means looking at what we do, what it costs the taxpayers for us to do it, and where the lasting benefits are. The business planning process has permitted the involvement of government caucus members in these decisions to an unprecedented degree. Committees of government MPPs reviewed ministries' draft business plans to add the local view to proposed changes.

Business planning is a different way to organize decisions about on what, where, and how government spends money. As part of this we identified areas where we could achieve cost savings. The report I am tabling today shows how this will be done over the next two years. I want to stress that the cost savings outlined are not additional reductions, but rather a progress report on what we have accomplished. There will be more decisions in the coming months. Today's report outlines areas where we are downsizing operations, saving money in administration, reducing waste and duplication, streamlining and transferring services, and taking a more businesslike approach to government.

Working towards the commitments made in the fall, the cost-saving measures being implemented will reduce the province's operating spending in this fiscal year by \$1.2 billion. This grows to a total of \$1.6 billion in 1997-98.

1350

We've also reviewed our capital programs to focus on core activities and achieve efficiencies. This will mean cost savings in the order of \$700 million in each of the next two years.

These changes will mean reducing the Ontario public service over the next two years by approximately 10,600 positions, of which 1,400 are currently vacant. I want to emphasize to the members that these are not all job losses. Some people will choose to retire, some will find other jobs and leave the Ontario public service and some will go with their functions when these are transferred to new employers. As I mentioned earlier, the government is committed to achieving additional savings and these will involve further downsizing of the Ontario public service.

Today's announcement reflects the directions taken in the ministries' business plans. Complete business plans will be published after the tabling of the provincial budget. In this way, we'll keep our commitment to make government more accountable to the people who pay the

bills—the taxpayers of Ontario. Our business plans are thorough and they are fair and they show we can do better for less.

The result will be more accountable, innovative and efficient government that is determined to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely, a key part of our plan to create jobs, hope and opportunity.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): If the minister and the government really felt that this was such a good-news announcement for the people of Ontario, they might have wanted opposition parties and media to have more than five minutes to look at it before we responded to his statement. I can tell you that in those five minutes we have already begun to see the impact of the kinds of cuts this government is making, the impact on services people need and the impact of these cuts on promises this government has made.

Just as one example, we noticed that there are some 682 positions being taken out of the Attorney General's department and there are some 568 positions being taken out of the Solicitor General's department. I wonder what happened to the Conservative promise that there would be no cuts to justice—gone the way of no cuts to health care and no cuts to education.

Then we see that there are some 954 positions being cut from the Ministry of Agriculture. I seem to remember a promise that was made that there would be no cuts to agriculture in this province in a Mike Harris government.

We are just beginning to see the nature of these cuts and what they are going to mean. One of the other things we've seen in these few minutes we've had to look at the details of these cuts is that—and I can't quite believe this—there are, believe it or not, caucus, a whole host of new user fees. This is from the Taxfighter government. This is Bill 26, part II. Welcome to Mike Harris's Ontario, the home of the user fee. Once again, we have a government that pays for its tax cut by making people pay as they go, whether they can afford it or not.

I'm still not sure that I believe what I just read. I hope the minister will tell me this is wrong, but I think we have just seen an announcement that sole-support parents who are on welfare who would like to be able to go back to school to get the training they need to become independent, to have that independent life that the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Premier keep talking about, those sole-support parents on welfare, if they want to go back to school, will be cut off welfare and they'll have to get their support through the student assistance plan, which is already inadequate to provide support for students who are reasonably able to pay some part of their costs. What you are saying, if we read this correctly, is that sole-support parents on welfare have no hope of going back to school and achieving lives of independence, which your government talks about so frequently.

I think that's just another example we see in this statement of Mike Harris's Ontario, where the most vulnerable get trampled in order to find the dollars fast to pay for a tax cut. Even the 10,000 jobs, which could have been achieved easily through attrition, are not going to be done that way, because this government is in such a hurry to find its tax cut in the next two years that it is going to

put people on the streets without work. They are not choosing to retire. This is the cold-hearted face of Mike Harris's Ontario.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I'd like to quote the last part of the statement, which says, "a key part of our plan" is "to create jobs, hope and opportunity." Nowhere in this document are those words going to be the truth. In fact, there is no hope, there is no plan to create jobs; there is no plan to create any opportunity for anybody. It's a litany of user fees; this document is replete with whole new user fees.

In addition to that, they have broken a litany of promises made during the last election campaign again and again. The key areas they said they would not touch—agriculture, education, health care, law enforcement—they said they would not touch those areas, and what do we see today? Nothing but cuts all over the place in those key areas; jobs lost in those key areas. In community after community there is going to be suffering. In community after community children will continue to face the wrath of this government. It's not good enough for the minister to stand up and say that there will be a better tomorrow for all of those children. There isn't going to be that. User fees are the order of the day. If you want it, you're going to have to pay for it in Ontario, and this government is going to make you pay for it in a way unseen in the past.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This is not a recipe to create jobs and restore hope. What we have here is a job-killing disaster, and we still don't have all the details. No one is thanking this government for anything it's doing, nor will they. They're taking us down the road of some of the American states where poverty and crime are now the order of the day.

The Chair of Management Board today has effectively delivered his first budget. What we saw today would normally be a substantial part of the government's budget speech, but of course the government is saving this year's budget for a special event: the tax cut for its wealthy friends. It doesn't suit this government's purpose to let the people see the connection between the reckless tax cut and all the damage that will be caused to communities and government services right across Ontario.

For example, the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board is being abolished. What message does that send to Ontarians who are being laid off in the public and private sectors—10,000 in the OPS, 10,000 in the schools and thousands elsewhere? Nothing in today's announcement will create one job or hope for the people of this province.

For farmers, this is just the latest insult. In the Common Sense Revolution the Tories promised no further cuts to agriculture. Today's announcement brings total cuts to farmers in this province to over 30%. Farmers say the government is sacrificing their ability to compete.

Also sacrificed to the tax cuts are Ontario's first nations. The government is wiping out funding for the Statement of Political Relationship and slashing capital spending and operating grants for aboriginal communities.

I doubt the Chair of Management Board has any idea what the ultimate effects of today's cuts will be, not just for farmers and aboriginal peoples, but on large and small

communities everywhere in Ontario. His government has refused to look at the obvious, refused to do any impact studies that would show what a disastrous path we're heading down. The government is even refusing today to release the business plans we all need. It only made public today sanitized summaries. What are you hiding?

The government tries to picture its slash-and-burn agenda as a valiant deficit-cutting attempt, but Ontarians will not be fooled. When the time comes to announce the multibillion-dollar tax giveaway, they will see what is really behind today's cuts in jobs and services.

1400

Will the government's wealthy friends be content with the tax cut? We doubt it. The wave of privatization this government is planning will be producing healthy profits for somebody, and people will be watching carefully to see who those people are. We don't think most Ontarians are going to benefit from the privatization of Ontario Hydro or TVO or hospital laboratories or many other services for which they'll be paying new or higher fees to cover these profits. After all, there's only one taxpayer. That same taxpayer also pays the fees that will be charged by the profit-making companies that will be moving in to snap up Ontario government services being privatized by this government.

It's amazing that the government thinks today's trick is going to work. The government figures that by next month, when the budget is finally tabled, Ontarians will have forgotten all about the slashing and job losses that are paying for this damaging tax cut. But people will not be fooled. They will see these cuts for what they are: the reckless fulfilment of a campaign tax promise that should never have been made in the first place.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Last week, when we raised questions in this House about the business plans being prepared by each of the ministries in the government, we were told the business plans had not been approved and no decisions had been made. Now we're told that in fact the business plans are in place, they have been approved, but they remain secret. All we get are synopses, cleaned-up summaries of what the business plans are.

When is this government actually going to come clean and make it clear to the people of Ontario what exactly the ramifications of the downsizing and offloading that you're proposing are going to be for the communities across Ontario? When are we going to know how much people are going to have to pay for services that have been provided for years free of charge and paid for through the tax system in this province? Why are you trying to make so much profit for your wealthy friends in addition to the tax cut that you're going to be promising them and giving them in the next budget?

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is to the Chairman of Management Board. I want to preface my question by indicating that I think

there is a fairly general agreement that we can have a more efficient and therefore a smaller public service. During the recent strike by OPSEU, I think we know that the OPSEU members understood and accepted that fact. Certainly, we in the Liberal Party agreed with that, which is why we had proposed an overall reduction of some 12,000 people in the public service over the course of four years. But I think there is a way of doing this humanely and there is a way of doing it with a bludgeon. This government, once again, has chosen a bludgeon. What they have announced is an attack on jobs and on services, and it is indeed the cold-hearted, mean face of the Common Sense Revolution.

In our discussions with Management Board staff, they have told us that some 3,000 people a year leave the public service through attrition. That means, with a very simple calculation, that this government could achieve not only the targeted cut of 10,000 positions, but even its larger target of 13,000 positions, through attrition over the term of its government. Instead, they are rushing through with slashing jobs and literally putting people out into the streets. That is for one reason and one reason only: It is to pay for a tax cut that benefits the wealthiest people in this province.

Minister, will you acknowledge that every one of those 10,000 jobs could have been reduced from the public service through the process of attrition, and the reason you are doing it in two years and laying people off to do it is because you need money fast to deliver a tax cut in the next two years?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As the member opposite has indicated, there will be a reduction in the civil service over the next couple of years. I outlined today some 10,600 positions. The business plans are not completely finalized. There'll be more decisions to be made and there'll be more positions which will be announced. Some of those positions are vacant, as I indicated earlier today—some 1,400. Some of the people will be leaving as a result of an unreduced early pension, for example, perhaps 10% of the staff in that regard. Some of the staff will be redeployed to other positions. And indeed, some of the staff will go as a job is privatized or outsourced; some of the staff will stay with the job and go to a new employer. So it's not as simple a matter as 10,600 people being laid off.

But I will say that this government has been put in a position because of the last 10 years of spending by the party associated with the member opposite, by the deficits associated with the previous government, some \$100 billion worth of debt.

This government, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to deliver the services the people of Ontario need, has to move and move quickly, to make the government more efficient, to deliver the services more effectively, to deliver the services at a lower cost, to do better with less. Private businesses are doing this. The federal government is doing this. About five provinces in Canada have balanced their budgets. It's time for this government to do better with less and make government more efficient in the province of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: I'm using Management Board officials' statements and their figures, and they tell us that the attrition rate is about 3,000 per year. That's really a simple calculation. That means that over two years, the two years you need dollars to pay for your tax cut, you would be able to reduce the size of the public service by some 6,000 people. I think you would have to agree that's a simple calculation. You're going well beyond that today. You're going beyond it by at least 4,600 positions. Those are 4,600 people who will not be, if I can borrow your rather cute-sounding language, choosing to retire. They are not people who are going to be voluntarily going to other jobs.

We have no indication that these people are going to go to other jobs created through your privatization plans, because we have no plans for your privatization. You haven't taken time to do any analysis of whether or not privatization is a good or a bad thing. In fact, you haven't even taken time to do an analysis of whether or not your downsizing will actually achieve a more effective and efficient civil service or just in fact be a loss of service.

I wonder if you have even taken the time, as a government, to look at the impact of these kinds of job losses on the economy of communities across this province. You're taking paycheques from about 10,000 families out of the economy in one fell swoop. I wonder if you can tell us whether you have indeed conducted any studies to measure the impact of these layoffs on the economy and what effect the elimination of these jobs will have on the economy of our communities.

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite has asked again about attrition. I would first of all point out that attrition across the whole civil service includes positions which are necessary for this government, protected areas such as health, law enforcement etc, that would have to be replaced. I think the member opposite would recognize that there are many positions which could be opened up as a result of attrition which would have to be completed.

Secondly, I would say that this exercise is not about the numbers in terms of job creation; this is about making government more effective, more efficient. Contrary to the member's opinion, the various ministries, the ministers themselves, the deputy ministers and the staff in each one of the ministries have sat down, studied, analysed thoroughly the impact of these changes on their ministries and they're convinced we can do better for less.

Ford, IBM, General Motors, the federal government, Alberta and various other governments have gone through the same exercise and have determined that they can deliver better services to their constituents, to their clients by going through this kind of exercise. This is what we've done. It's been a very thorough exercise. It's been a very fair exercise. I will assure the member opposite that it is this government's firm belief that at the end of the day, when this restructuring is in place, the people of Ontario will have better services and at a reduced cost.

Mrs McLeod: It is difficult to give credibility to any of the statements the minister makes when he tells us that there are protected areas, protected areas like justice. Minister, you've cut 1,250 positions from the Attorney General's and Solicitor General's departments. If that is

a protected area, we can only begin to imagine what is happening in unprotected areas, in your government's view.

Our critic for agriculture, who will undoubtedly have significant concerns with this statement and this announcement today, described some of the minister's responses as bullfeathers; I think that is considered parliamentary language, and I think that's what we're hearing today, which is why I have to wonder about whether this is the end of the job losses or the beginning.

1410

Minister, I take you back to the Minister of Finance's statement of November, in which the two-year cost reduction goals for internal government administration and government operations were 33%. Again in discussions with Management Board personnel, we determined that with 81,000 staff members in the public service, a 33% cut in payroll, which is where the primary bulk of the costs are, would mean a job loss of some 27,000 people. Are you telling us in your statement today that you now will not have to cut another 17,000 jobs? Will you assure us that there are no further job losses to be incurred as a result of further cuts and of your tax cut?

Hon David Johnson: I've clearly outlined that we are still in the process of creating the business plans to make sure we do deliver services most effectively and efficiently. I can assure the member that there will be further expenditure reductions and further reductions in positions within the civil service over and above what I have announced today.

I don't expect the member opposite to understand that, though, because the member was a part of a government which increased spending in the late 1980s by \$10 billion over a three-year period. To a large degree this is the source of the problem we face today in terms of trying to make government efficient and effective.

The member opposite asks about the economy and the impact on the economy. What is most effective in improving the economy, whether it's in the large centres or small centres, is to have a restoration of confidence in the province of Ontario that this government can come to grips with its financial problems, that this government is looking at ways to eliminate the red tape and allow businesses to expand and to invest in Ontario.

That's what we're doing through these business plans. We're going to do better for less, we're going to encourage business, we're going to get out of the way of business and we're going to develop more opportunities for business in Ontario. There'll be more jobs and hope and opportunity for the people of Ontario.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): We will return in other questions to the specifics of the statements, but one of our concerns is that the job losses that have been announced today, and the minister has just indicated it's only the beginning of the job losses which he himself will announce, are part of a larger job loss in the broader public sector, which is why I'll direct my second question to the Minister of Education and Training.

I have some concerns about the way in which cuts are being made in accordance with the November financial statement and a particular concern as I look at the fiscal statement and the savings summary as they apply to schools. The targets in 1996-97, again in 1997-98 and in 1998-99 for cuts to education are an unchanging target of \$400 million over those three years.

The actual full-year effect of the cuts which you have announced in education for public school boards alone is now \$696 million. That does not include the cuts you've made to separate schools or to French-language schools. Your financial target, as clearly stated by the Minister of Finance, was a \$400-million cut to education, to schools. Why have you cut education by at least twice that amount?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Our position on funding for schools in the province of Ontario is very clear. It has been very clear from the beginning of the formation of this government. We say that we want a higher-quality, higher accountability in our school system and a more affordable school system for the province. I think that's what the parents and the taxpayers in Ontario want and need.

We made an announcement on November 29 that we would reduce from next year \$400 million from our GLGs. We've mitigated the effect on our operating side by having a one-year moratorium on construction and we're making announcements about our next year's GLG well in advance of the normal announcements so that school boards have a chance to adjust and find the savings in their systems that will reflect those changes and grants.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, what you say when you respond to our questions about how you are making these kinds of cuts without hurting classroom education is that you think the cuts can be made from administration, and you cite the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force, which I'm sure you're about to do in the supplementary, so let me save you the trouble. Because one of the facts of the School Board Reduction Task Force is that when they look at the cost of education, they leave out things like school busing and school maintenance and adult education and teacher preparation time. I think surely something like busing students in rural areas to schools is something you would consider to be a legitimate cost.

That report also says that to get down to a cost of 40% of education dollars being spent on administration, you would have to take action by amalgamating school boards, reforming educational finance, bringing in provincial bargaining and paying 100% of all of the costs of provincial regulatory and statutory requirements, none of which you have done. What you have done is reduce the per-pupil grant, and this is for public boards alone, by some \$32 million; junior kindergarten grants by some \$145 million; adult education by some \$150 million; transportation by \$39 million; and the per-pupil grant by \$163 million, as well as the moratorium on capital of \$167 million. Minister, that is \$696 million in cuts to public boards alone.

If you haven't made those cuts, tell us which cuts you haven't made, and tell us, when boards add to that the cost of the social contract and have to find \$1 billion in

cost reductions, where you think they'll find it without hurting classroom education.

Hon Mr Snobelen: The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, and somewhat articulately, the fact that the Sweeney commission report indicated that there were valuable services that happen outside of the classroom. I think it's fairly obvious that transportation happens outside of the classroom. If it happened inside the classroom, it would make quite a mess.

To the Leader of the Opposition, there's no denying that some of these services are valuable. That's why the Sweeney commission report suggested that 40% of the \$14 billion or so that's spent on schools in the province would happen outside of the classroom. The commission actually reported that it wanted to shrink from 47% to 40% and that that's the place those reductions should be made.

It's interesting, too, to point out that there are several other studies, all of which point to the fact that the taxpayers of Ontario are not getting the kind of value for their education dollar that they should get, that people in other provinces get. It's our intention to make sure they get that level of value along with the kind of quality our students expect and deserve.

Mrs McLeod: There's absolutely nothing real about that. That is sheer nonsense. You've just told us that because you technically don't consider transportation to be a classroom education cost, you technically haven't cut classroom education. You're just not going to make sure the kids get to school at all.

That is sheer nonsense, Minister, and that's the problem with every answer we get, because you cannot make these kinds of cuts without hurting classroom education. You cannot get from that 47% to 40%, which is based on 1994 data, without doing all of those things that this task force said you had to do, including paying 100% of statutory requirement costs. So let me tell you what is happening in fact because of your cuts.

Boards in Brant county, for example, are looking at layoffs of some 280 noonhour supervisors, but as well some 69 elementary teachers and 31 secondary school teachers. In the Carleton board they're facing layoffs of 450 employees. In Dufferin county they're expecting to lay off 30 elementary teachers and 20 secondary teachers; in Durham, 79 elementary teachers and they don't know how many secondary teachers; Essex county, 59 teachers expected to be laid off; Frontenac county, a potential of 300 layoffs; Lincoln county, 210 teachers, 20 plant staff, 30 support staff; Niagara, 280 employee layoffs expected; Sault Ste Marie, 65; my board in the Lakehead, in Thunder Bay, 200 teachers and maintenance staff to go. 1420

That is just a partial list, a partial list that shows that we expect to see about 2,400 positions, including primarily teaching positions, lost in just 14 of 168 boards. Do you still stand up and say that your cuts are not hurting classroom education in this province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Let me assure the leader of the opposition party in answer to her question—and I'd like to repeat the answer I gave a member of the government the other day. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will

take note of this response, because it'll be the same response the next time she asks this question.

This government understands the importance of the vitality and the energy young teachers bring to the classroom, and we know those teachers are vulnerable by some of the actions of the boards. The protection of those jobs, it seems to me and to this government, is a function of the negotiations between the unions representing teachers and the boards. That is their responsibility, the way we are currently structured, so we have encouraged them to enter into negotiations that will protect those jobs, and I expect that's what will happen in boards across the province.

Let me add this: I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. This government agrees that fundamental changes need to happen in the funding mechanisms and the governing mechanisms for education in the province, and we are committed to making those changes. That's one of the reasons we did not, for next year, announce on November 29 a billion-dollar cut in education but announced a \$400-million reduction, because we know there are some changes that have to happen. In response to the requests from boards, we have mitigated the operating-side effect of those reductions, allowing school boards to find the savings by putting a one-year moratorium on capital.

Once again, I believe the people of Ontario not only understand that there are savings available in our education system but expect us to find and make those savings.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The minister can't get away with trying to blame the boards for his cuts.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to return to the announcement made by the Chair of the Management Board with regard to the business plans.

We know that the announcements made today are really made because of the commitment of the government to try and separate this announcement from the commitment that will be announced in the budget for a tax cut. You don't want people to make the connection between the effects on their communities, the loss of public services, the extra costs involved and the tax cut. You don't want to show damage to the economy.

Can the minister, since he's made this statement now, table in this House the impact studies the government has done on communities in the province of the new approaches announced in these business plans?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Through the budget process and after the budget process, the member and all the members of this House will receive, as I indicated in my speech, the business plans. The reason for tabling this information at this time is that we are now embarking on the new fiscal year.

All the ministries have targets to achieve. The ministries need to get on with their business plans, with implementing their various projects.

In addition, the government of course gives grants and transfer payments to various partners, and the government

wants to be open and honest in communicating with its various partners in terms of what their fiscal situation is. April 1, as the member opposite will know, is the start of the fiscal year. We have endeavoured, as early in this fiscal year as possible, to make as much of this information open and visible not only to the members of this Legislature and the people of Ontario but the various partners.

The member opposite will receive a copy of the business plans after the budget has been tabled.

Mr Wildman: The minister says he wants to be open and honest with the public. My question was exactly that. Is he prepared to table the impact studies that will show the impacts on the communities of the changes announced today?

For instance, if we look at the list, some of the worst areas for targeting by this government are the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Ministry of Environment and Energy, so much so that it appears it's going to be very difficult for this government to continue to protect the environment in this province.

Can the minister make it very clear to everyone in the province what the impacts are going to be for this area of government activity by tabling the business plans now so that we know the impacts and it's clear to everyone, rather than having to wait until after you've made your tax cut announcement in the budget?

Hon David Johnson: I wish to assure the member opposite again that the business plans will be tabled as outlined, in conjunction with and after the budget is announced. I also wish to assure the member opposite that the objective of this exercise is to deliver better services to the people of Ontario. I will say that in the ministries he has mentioned—agriculture and environment, for example—those ministers have looked at their core duties, their core responsibilities, their core objectives and have determined that they can meet those objectives, meet those needs of their constituents and will be delivering better services to the people of the province of Ontario.

Mr Wildman: This is very strange for a minister who says he wants to be open and honest. He's essentially announcing business plans today. He isn't prepared to give us the impact studies, if they've done any. He won't even give us the business plans he's announced for another month.

When you make the announcements in the budget for the tax cut, the wealthy people in this province who are going to benefit from that tax cut will also have the opportunity, I guess, because of these business plans, to make even greater profits at the expense of the people of this province because of your privatization plans.

Have you done any impact studies on what the privatization plans for the liquor stores or TVO or Ontario Hydro might mean in terms of increased rates and user fees for the people of this province? Are you prepared to come clean and give us that information now, rather than having to wait until after the budget a month from now?

Hon David Johnson: The summary of the business plans that is being tabled here today does not reflect any decisions with regard to TVOntario, with regard to the

liquor board or with regard to Ontario Hydro. If that's the member's question, I can assure him that those three agencies, boards, are not involved in the summary of the business plans that is here today.

The business plans are an ongoing proposition and they're being developed. We are following the plan and the schedule we outlined to this House in terms of a reduction in expenditures. Those reductions in expenditures were announced last fall in the statement of the Minister of Finance. We said we'd report back to the House. That's precisely what we're doing today; we're reporting back to the Legislature in terms of the expenditure reductions we outlined last fall.

We've also said that we would bring to this House the business plans after the Minister of Finance has tabled his budget, and that's precisely what we're going to do. The process is open, the process is one we've outlined and we are following the process.

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Health. I find this quite interesting. Here we have the Chair of Management Board standing talking to us about the summary of the business plans and yet we're not going to get copies of those business plans. In fact, the summary of your ministry's business plan is quite interesting, not in what it says, but in what it doesn't say. Sources have told us that your ministry's real business plan includes details about plans you have to further privatize medical laboratory services in this province. Can you confirm that Dynacare Laboratories could stand to benefit from your plans to further privatize medical laboratory services?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I think if the honourable member looks at the summary that's provided today—and the honourable member my colleague the Chairman of Management Board is correct, the business plans are not completed in all ministries—the summary that's provided is the same overview I've been giving in speeches for the past nine months. There is nothing new contained there today.

We have talked about highest quality, best price in all the services we've delivered. We've shown how that works with respect to dialysis services, acquired brain injury services and other reinvestment strategies we've made, which, by the way, are working very, very well since we announced and implemented many of those new services and expanded services over the past few months. No stone will be left unturned with respect to highest quality, best price.

Yes, we're looking at laboratories, we're looking at ambulances, we're looking at other services the ministry provides, but no decisions have been taken. We've been absolutely forthright and honest about this approach since day one in becoming Minister of Health in this province.

1430

Ms Lankin: Interesting. My question was, can you confirm that Dynacare Laboratories could stand to benefit from your plans to privatize medical laboratory testing? You completely ignored that. Let me go on and ask you a little bit more about Dynacare, because I've spent some

time reading a discussion paper which they sent personally to you, Mr Minister. It's very interesting reading: a lot of very strong arguments in which they advocate for much greater privatization of health care services, and a lot of interesting stuff. One of the interesting things they said is that they look forward to having a voice at Queen's Park.

They've backed that up with \$4,000 in donations to the Progressive Conservative central campaign and a total of \$3,000 to senior Tory cabinet ministers' campaigns, including yours, Minister, during the last provincial election. Do you consider it appropriate that Dynacare should stand to benefit from your move to privatization of health care services?

Hon Mr Wilson: Dynacare, MDS and many other private labs of which there are several dozen in the province are already, with or without this government, making arrangements to provide management services in Toronto Hospital and many other hospitals throughout the province. Sunnybrook hospital recently signed a deal with respect to that.

Again, highest quality, best price, full union cooperation with all of those deals, and they should be something that's celebrated by the honourable member and not condemned as we move towards greater efficiencies and our partners in the hospital sector realize the challenge they are facing and try to deliver services, maintaining quality and maintaining access to those services, but doing it at highest quality, best price.

With respect to submissions—Dynacare's notes to me, MDS's notes to me, notes that the honourable member has sent to me, that the former Treasurer, Mr Laughren, has sent to me—on behalf of public sector labs, I intend as part of the review we're undertaking of this sector to look at all of the representations we've received, both from the public sector and the private sector. Again, our policy of highest quality, best price will prevail in that review.

Ms Lankin: Minister, you said you think people should be celebrating; in fact I think Dynacare is celebrating right now. These are interesting words they use, that they look forward to having a voice at Queen's Park. It actually looks like they might have achieved that. It's our understanding that Sheila Corriveau, who is a public relations manager for Dynacare, started work in your office yesterday as your special assistant, communication.

This is all about who benefits and who hurts. Your government's plans for massive privatization of public services have nothing to do with what's in the best interests of the public you're elected to serve. This is all about who's going to benefit, your plans and your ministry, to sell off our public health care system to the private for-profit corporations, many of them coming up from the US, rubbing their hands with greed. This is all about lining the pockets of your obviously very close friends. How can you defend this?

Hon Mr Wilson: The accusation the honourable member is trying to make is simply ridiculous. The truth of the matter is that Mrs Corriveau knew my ministry for nine months has been looking for a communication assistant. It's one position we had not filled. She approached me and said she was available. I looked over

her quality of work, I interviewed a number of people, and I think if you made the phone call to Dynacare right now, they're not very happy about Mrs Corriveau leaving their employ. She was a very valuable employee to them, and I'm very happy that she's joined our staff to fill a vacancy.

Secondly, it's extremely unfair of this member to say that because, for example, some of the government employees who will be laid off over the next few months as a result of today's development worked for the Ontario government, they can't somehow now go work in the private sector for firms that may deal with this government—it's the same principle you're trying to apply in this case, and it doesn't wash. We hire people based on their quality and ability to do the job, and that is how Mrs Corriveau was hired in my office.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. On page 10 of your Common Sense Revolution it says, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut." In the announcement made today, you have announced a cut of \$11.1 million over the next two years in programs for people with developmental disabilities.

These are children who need stimulation because they're born with disabilities. These are children with multiple disabilities and handicaps. These are services to kids in their homes.

We're talking about adults with developmental disabilities. Life skills programs come under this area. Workshops for adults come under this area. Adult protective services come under this area. Respite services in the home so the families can get a break come under this area.

Can you tell the House today how you can justify these cuts to the most vulnerable people in our society when you committed that you were not going to cut one cent from the disabled? What do you tell those kids and those adults? If the minister knows the information, he doesn't need the Chair of Management Board to explain it to him.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): First of all, I want to ask, in response to the member's first question, what in the heck he's talking about. We're not cutting services to the disabled. We have a clear strategy for reinvestment into the area for the disabled.

Mr Agostino: It is obvious you don't know, you don't understand your ministry and you don't have a clue how these cuts are going to impact your ministry. It is in your document: "Redesigning Services for People with Developmental Disabilities." Over two years, \$11.1 million will be cut. You call it a saving. In reality it is a cut; \$11.1 million in services for the most vulnerable children and disabled people in our society.

Do you understand this? Do you know what you have done? It is hard to believe that you're sitting there totally baffled by what is happening here. Trying to get an explanation from the minister that you don't know—can

you tell us again what the cut of \$11.1 million means for people with developmental disabilities? How are they going to be impacted by this cut of \$11.1 million?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Here we go again. The same member is continually trying to distort the reality, distort the truth of what's happening. I finally figured out what he's talking about, because the way he was talking about it, he was talking like we're cutting programs for the disabled. This is the only thing I can discern that he's talking about, that we are continuing and we're redesigning the services for people with developmental disabilities. This is a continuing commitment that was started not only under the—actually, it didn't start under the NDP. It's been going on for a number of years, and this is the moving from institutionalization into the community-based services. Your government was a part of this and it continued on under the NDP.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: In answer to the interjection by the Leader of the Opposition, this is clearly the same program that was contained under your government.

Mr Agostino: Read what's in front of you.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Hamilton East, listen to the answer.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The process is not a new process. It was started three years ago. Clearly what we're trying to do right now is reinvest into community-based services. I'm sure Mr Silipo would certainly indicate that's what he was doing as well. We're also going to be reinvesting all this money. What we're looking at as well is making sure we have a seamless delivery.

1440

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. Today's announcement lays the foundation for the government's privatization plan. During the last few months, we've seen almost nightly commercials on television against the government's plans to sell off some of Ontario's greatest assets, including Niagara Falls and Ontario Hydro, the LCBO and others, to the highest bidder. In view of your government's commitment to sell off Ontario's assets to your powerful corporate friends, can you assure the House today that the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which provides clean, safe, reliable water to thousands of Ontarians, will not be part of the great Ontario sell-off? Will you guarantee that OCWA will remain in public hands?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the member opposite for the question. She's referring to the Ontario Clean Water Agency. This is an agency that was founded under the previous government to provide infrastructure funding and infrastructure itself to municipalities across this province. Since taking government, we have heard continuous complaints that this agency has not been able to fulfil the mandate it was originally intended to do. One of its key mandates was to encourage private sector funding in municipal sewage and water treatment. It has not occurred, and we will be

looking at that mandate to see if we can improve upon that key mandate request.

Ms Churley: I believe the answer is that they are going to be privatizing it. That was an incredible answer. Do you remember the recent health problems in Collingwood? Somebody died. We're talking about safe, reliable water here, which is fundamental and basic to human health.

I have a press release here from the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. In part, it says, "Any reduction in provincial funding for local water and sewer projects will seriously strain Ontario's already deteriorating infrastructure, threaten our supply of clean drinking water, increase emergency repair costs and drain jobs."

There are many communities across the province which require funds for new water treatment facilities. They don't have the money. Yet today you are announcing further cuts to the funds which municipalities rely on to ensure their safe drinking water. In view of your funding cuts, what assurances can you give us today that the necessary infrastructure improvements will take place to provide safe, clean water? Or, let me ask you again, are you simply going to turn it over to the private sector, throw up your hands and hope for the best?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would like to assure all members of this House and all citizens of the province that clean, safe drinking water is a priority of this government. It is absolutely fundamental to this province and to this government's commitment to its citizens.

Firstly, I would like to say that there was an incident in Collingwood. The Minister of Health and myself are both on record as saying this was a fluke. There have been problems. To date, we have not yet been able to ascertain that problem through testing. The medical doctors in the town of Collingwood today are drinking the water in that system. The water is safe.

Having said that, in the past few years successive governments have invested \$4 billion and more in sewage and water infrastructure. We are committed to spending over \$335 million on water and sewer infrastructure over the next two years. I quite agree with the member that we do need to find new ways to get new investment in water and sewers. Governments across this country have realized that they cannot, as governments, invest solely government money in infrastructure any longer. We need partners. We are looking for those partners and finding new ways to work together for the betterment of all our municipalities and communities.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, in December, as well as in an earlier question asked by the member for Beaches-Woodbine, you announced the reinvestment in services for those with acquired brain injury, ABI. At the time you said that this reinvestment in Ontario-based services would allow the province to repatriate 76 ABI patients who are currently receiving treatment in the United States. This news is a tremendous relief to those patients living far from home and their families. I know that

many of the other members have families in their own ridings that have been anxiously awaiting the return of a family member from the US. In my own riding I am aware of a family that has been greatly concerned about a family member with ABI. They had expressed concern that facilities in Ontario were underfunded and the present conditions for treatment of brain-injured individuals needed to be changed.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Are you our guest speaker today, Bert?

Mr Bert Johnson: Minister, can you provide the House and the member for Kingston and The Islands with an update on your ministry's repatriation efforts and improvements to services available directly out of the reinvestment?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I thank my colleague from the riding of Perth for the question. It's a very important question because, as you know, in mid-December this government announced that we'd be repatriating some 76 patients with acquired brain injuries who are currently receiving their treatment in the United States, that we'd be bringing home those services and also bringing home the dollars spent on those services, and of course bringing home the people receiving those services and providing those services in the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to provide the House, through the member for Perth, with an update which indicates that since December a total of about nine communities, including Ottawa, York, Essex, Kent, Peel, Halton, Niagara and Hamilton, have received additional funds to either put in new and expanded services or to upgrade existing services. So far, I'm pleased to announce, some nine patients have come home from the United States, back to their lived ones here in Ontario to receive the care that the health providers of Ontario are more than capable of providing in this province.

Mr Bert Johnson: Minister, that's fantastic news for those patients and their families who have been reunited. As well, it's good news for those individuals in Ontario who are presently receiving treatment for ABI. When can the rest of those being treated in the States expect similar news?

Hon Mr Wilson: It's again a very good question, because it's a question that's asked by the loved ones of the patients who are currently receiving treatment in the United States. Some 67 patients remain in the United States. We are dealing with the families and their loved ones on a case-by-case basis. The worst thing that could happen is some interruption in the treatment, so the reinvestment that we announced in December is rapidly building up the resources we need in Ontario to bring those patients back to Ontario to receive their treatment. I expect over the next six, eight and 12 months we should see most of the 67 patients back in Ontario and reunited with their families.

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AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is for the Deputy Premier, the member for Parry Sound, who I know is in the precinct. This question concerns

rural Ontario, and Parry Sound fits that bill. The minister will know that between the summer of 1994 and June 8, 1995, he and his colleague Mr Harris and his colleague Mr Villeneuve and others in the Progressive Conservative caucus travelled around rural Ontario promising solemnly, promising repeatedly, that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, under previous administrations, had borne, thank you very much, altogether too much of government reductions, and that if Mike Harris formed a government on June 8, agriculture would not be expected to take any further cuts. It couldn't be clearer. I have the document, the Conservative election platform, in my hand.

In today's announcement, Deputy Premier, you have taken an additional \$60 million out of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget in this fiscal year. You are clearly eviscerating field services. You are going to gut the agricultural college programs at Ridgetown and Kemptville.

I say to the Deputy Premier, given your solemn promise of a year ago that you would not cut the Ministry of Agriculture budget beyond the \$450 million that you had inherited when you took office, how can you say to the farmers of Ontario today that, having already cut over \$60 million further out of that budget, you have not broken faith with rural Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): The honourable member for Renfrew North will know that my colleague the Minister of Agriculture has travelled across the province consulting with various groups in the agricultural and rural community. As a matter of fact, I too have been part of a consultation process. Members of the agricultural community in rural Ontario have been in with the Minister of Agriculture talking to me about what they'd like to see in the budgetary process. I can say very directly to the honourable member that the members of those various agricultural organizations understand the problem that the province of Ontario has with respect to its fiscal and economic difficulty and they also, quite frankly, offered to be part of the solution to the economic problems in Ontario as opposed to part of the problem.

Mr Conway: Let me say to the Deputy Premier, the member for Parry Sound, I'm not interested in what you're doing after June 8 as much as I am interested in what you promised to rural Ontario before the election of June 8, 1995. This is all about the worth of the word of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and Noble Villeneuve. It is hard not to agree with the Tory member for Brant-Haldimand, who was quoted in the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder of March 23, 1996. Let me quote the member, Mr Preston, directly: "I don't want anyone to make a liar out of me. It would be embarrassing personally to me and to every other person that ran for the government. We said it would not be a cut."

Today you have cut, in this fiscal year, over \$60 million out of the agriculture budget. How have you not made a liar out of the member for Brant-Haldimand, out of the member for Hastings-Peterborough and out of the Minister of Agriculture himself?

Hon Mr Eves: I would refer the honourable member to page 3 of the document of which he speaks, the

recommendations in the rural task force report. I'd like him to go through them item by item and go over what we've lived up to and what we haven't to date, bearing in mind that we've been in power for less than 10 months.

Income tax cut: That is going to be delivered. Cut non-priority government spending: being done. Support the establishment of a whole farm support program: You know very well we're working with the federal government to accomplish just that. Increase market revenue insurance coverage to 85%: done. Retain the farm property rebate program until after reform of the provincial property tax system: still in place, and it's being done. Introduce workfare: being done by my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services. Repeal Bill 91: done. Review the wetlands policy and reform: done. Abolish mandatory junior kindergarten: done. The last one, I say to the honourable member, firearms acquisition certificates: done as well.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE RESTRUCTURING

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, in the summary of the business plan which was released today, you say the Ministry of Natural Resources "remains committed to its vision of the sustainable development of Ontario's natural resources." We see today in that statement that some 2,100 MNR staff are going to be laid off over the next two years. That represents almost half of the full-time staff who work for your ministry. The majority of those people are involved in the protection and the management of Ontario's natural resources like timber, fish and wildlife. I want to ask you, Minister, given that your ministry is effectively being gutted today, who is going to protect the natural resources on behalf of the people of Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): The short answer is that I think the member is misinterpreting the data to start with. Some 2,100 are mentioned, but they're not all full-time. There are vacant positions in that; there are part-time positions; there are retirements. It is a significant downsizing, though, and it's in line with what we promised the people of Ontario—that we would deliver more with less.

We will be able to deliver on our core responsibilities. This plan was developed not from some past budget, going line by line; it was based on the function that we have to do, and built up from that. I think when you read the whole thing and look at it in the fullness of time, you'll appreciate the work that's gone into this by the staff and the number of people who have been consulted.

Ms Martel: The question I asked was, who is going to protect the natural resources for the people of the province of Ontario?

Let me give you an example around timber management in particular. It's clear from the business document that you intend to hand over the management and the protection of timber resources to the large forestry companies, and I want to remind you of what can happen when you do that.

In a report which was done for your own ministry on the management of the Lac Seul Forest by McKenzie Forest Products, the committee concluded, and I quote: "The large discrepancy between harvest and regeneration activities reflects poor planning and poor implementation of regeneration strategies. The committee interprets this as a pursuit of short-term profits at the expense of long-term sustainability."

Minister, you're putting Ontario's timber resources at risk. Those are resources which belong to all of the people of the province of Ontario. How can you possibly defend your actions?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think the member opposite has shown why we need change in the way forests are managed in Ontario. The criticism that's been given clearly illustrates that we need to have better standards, better auditing, more professional checks that are done.

I think they realize there's been a change that's been evolving since 1980 in the forest industry, with the FMAs, and most recently with the past administration's decision to bring in Bob Carman and start a process of allowing for private sector companies to assume more of the responsibilities of tree planting and silviculture. One of the changes we're allowing is so that small operators will have the opportunity to participate in our economy as well, and that bill is before the House, as you're quite aware.

I think you will agree, and this whole House will agree, that our forests are important to all Ontarians and that we are delivering a plan which is in line with taking us to the next century, to have trees available for future generations.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): My question as well is for the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines. Last week, the Minister of Education and Training announced in the House a new initiative that would help young people in Ontario get jobs. That program is called Ontario summer jobs. In his statement to the House, he indicated that this program would help young people in the north. Could you explain how this program will help young people in the north, Mr Minister?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question. I think everyone in this House would strongly agree that we all believe we need to invest in the future. Young people must have opportunities to discover and develop future careers. This is why I'm pleased to announce—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Oh, don't read it, at least fake it.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I had the pleasure of being here last year and watching other ministers read continuously.

This is why I'm pleased to be able to continue to fund the northern Ontario training opportunities program. Through Nortop, young people in northern Ontario have been able to gain invaluable on-the-job training which has eased their transition into the workforce. This year,

Nortop will serve as a key element of our government's summer jobs program. In fact, not only are we keeping the program, we're funding it an additional \$1 million, to bring it to \$6.3 million for this year. With Nortop in place, more than 3,000 jobs for young people will be created in the north.

Interjections.

Mr Skarica: It's hard to hear the answer, Mr Speaker, due to all the yelling.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Don't you have it in front of you?

Mr Skarica: No, I don't, as a matter of fact.

When will this program be up and running?

Hon Mr Hodgson: It's clear that the opposition isn't interested in good news for the north, especially when it involves jobs for young people in the north.

In answer to your question, the guide books and application forms will be available in the next week, and to get this program up and running in a cost-effective way, we'll be using our northern development offices or NDOs to contact past and potential employers and distribute application forms.

Providing on-the-job training to our young people is an investment in our future and it's another example of our government's commitment to creating jobs across the north for our young people.

1500

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy, if there is a ministry left. The government has cut, as I calculate, \$200 million more from the Ministry of Environment. The only people in the province I can think will be cheering that are the polluters who for so many years fought tooth and nail against every regulation, every piece of legislation and every expenditure by this ministry designed to protect the people of this province from pollution and from polluters.

With a cut of \$200 million, the virtual gutting of your ministry, how can you ever hope, as Minister of Environment, to be able to deal with the complex and important environmental problems that confront this province? Why don't you say to the Minister of Finance and to the Premier that you are prepared to resign to protest the gutting of your ministry?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I would like to assure every member of this House and every citizen of this province that this government feels the quality of our environment, the protection of our environment is fundamental to the success and health of this province.

Taking care of the environment in this province is serious business. When I was elected to this government, I was elected to do my part to restore this province to fiscal soundness. I believe and I know the Ministry of Environment can do its job to protect this environment in a fiscally sound manner as a part of our government's agenda.

We are going to return to our core business in protecting the environment. We are going to be customer driven.

We are going to do a good job. We are going to implement better management. We are going to achieve cost recovery, and we are going to enlist partners in developing environmental stewardship throughout this province.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We've just had an answer from the Minister of Natural Resources in response to a question in this House regarding the summaries of business plans that were announced by the Chair of the Management Board earlier this session in which the Minister of Natural Resources stated that the 2,100 staff being cut from his ministry were not all full-time people. That raises a question of the integrity and the competence of the whole announcement today. Are these 10,600 full-time equivalent positions or are they not? Are they part-time or not?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member does not have a point of order.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: In an answer to the member for Wentworth North, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines alluded to the northern ministry being used for something other than the intent or rationale behind the ministry. On a point of privilege, I would like an explanation from the minister. The people of northern Ontario would like an explanation.

The Speaker: Order. I've heard your point of privilege. You don't have a point of privilege.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would have thought that there would at least be some explanation from the government. How can we be expected to proceed in this place this afternoon when a major statement is promoted by the government for the last couple of weeks saying we're going to get the business plans, the whole world is going to be told about the business plans, and then in one of the last questions in the House the Minister of Natural Resources basically says everything we've been told today is not true? We need the information here. We're elected to represent our constituents. We want to know where these business plans are and we're not prepared to proceed in this place until the information is available.

The Speaker: Order. I have no jurisdiction over whether they supply you the information or not. That's not up to me.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: What is bothering us so much is that when the Chair of Management Board stood in his place and presented his statement today, he made it very clear that the 10,600 positions to be lost in the Ontario public service are full-time equivalent. Then, when the Minister of Natural Resources was asked a question about the 2,100 lost positions in his ministry, he said: "Don't make the mistake of thinking that they're all full-time jobs. Lots of them are part-time jobs."

We have to get to the bottom of this or this place can't function. We cannot have one minister standing in his place and saying one thing, another minister saying another thing just a few minutes later and expect the opposition to cooperate with the orderly business in this place. It cannot happen.

There's a long tradition of members being allowed to stand in their place and correct their own record in this

place. I cannot correct their record; only they can correct their record, I'm sure you agree with that, and the opposition is giving them a chance to make that clear. I can tell you right now that either the Minister of Natural Resources or the Chair of Management Board is completely incompetent. Maybe they both are, but for sure one of them is and we need a clarification.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Mr Speaker, continuing on this point of order—and this is a demand to have the record clarified at this point in time by one of the two ministers—it is not just the members of this House who need and deserve this information. There are workers out there, there are families of workers, there are 10,600 people and their families who are going to be affected and there are thousands more wondering: “Is it me? Is it my family? Is it my co-worker?”

We've got conflicting information; we've got different stories being told. For the last two weeks in this House, if we've asked questions of any of these ministers, we have been told, “Just wait.” The Minister of Finance told me personally on a number of occasions: “The member's just going to have to wait and we'll give her that information. The business plans are coming forward. We'll be giving you the information about how many people are affected. We'll be telling you exactly where the cuts are. We'll be telling you what we're going to privatize, what our plans are.”

We got nothing today from this government but a communications exercise. You have had leaked documents, leaked information. This was a damage control exercise. This is your spin doctors sitting behind the bench, trying to put a blanket over everything. You know it doesn't work. We're not stupid here; the people of Ontario are not stupid. The workers in the public service deserve to have some clear information from you. Tell us what it is.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I want to apologize if there's a misunderstanding here. They are full-time equivalents but it's not half our work force, and there are vacant positions involved in that, if that clarifies the record and satisfies the opposition.

The Speaker: Obviously, there is a great difference of opinion here.

Mr Cooke: The Minister of Natural Resources gets up now and tells us it's 2,100 full-time equivalents. There are just over 4,000 people who work for your ministry. That's almost half. Don't you know how your own ministry runs? I've never seen such incompetence: 4,500 and 2,100.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has a point of order.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Mr Speaker, on the same point of order: We're having great difficulty understanding what the Minister of Natural Resources is telling us today and we would appreciate it if he could just stand up and clarify why his ministry is taking at least 20% of all the job losses in the entire public sector that Mr Johnson announced today. If he would stand up and confirm how many job losses there are: Is it true that one in five civil servants is being laid

off from his ministry? What that's doing to northern Ontario is quite incredible and—

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, responding to the same point of order, I may be mistaken, but I thought question period ended about 10 minutes ago.

The members opposite know full well that the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development and Mines has just clarified the record. If you're not happy with an answer, there is a standing order. You've used it yourselves on many occasions. If you're not satisfied with an answer, there's a procedure to debate that further after the House adjourns at 6 o'clock.

With respect to the comment of the member for Windsor-Riverside and others, let me be perfectly clear. Today was a summary of the decisions that have been made to date by the government. Today we announced what decisions we've made to date. The business plans are not finalized. That's why you don't have them, because we don't have them.

I know the previous government finds it difficult to believe that there would be a government that would deal honestly, openly and directly with people. That's what we did yesterday about MPP compensation and pensions, and that's what we're doing today about trying to manage the—

The Speaker: Order.

There have been many points of order raised on the very issue with regard to the questions in the House today. There is a procedure to go through if you're not satisfied with their answers. Points of order or points of privilege are not, I don't believe, one of them. If you want to—

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: On a new issue? The leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: If I may have the attention of the government House leader, I've just been informed by the House leader of our party that on Bill 34, which we consider to be an omnibus education bill, not unlike Bill 26 that this government tried to bully through this House before Christmas, a bill which brings about fundamental changes in education which are going to lay off hundreds and hundreds of teachers and take junior kindergarten away, the House leader of the government has refused to allow the committee hearings to go beyond Toronto.

Mr Speaker, I believe that is a violation of any order or privilege of the members of this House and of every person in this province who wants an opportunity to respond and I'm asking for—

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: On the same issue? If it's the same one, I won't accept it.

Ms Martel: Mr Speaker, when I raised the question today, I can assure you that I had called the Ministry of Natural Resources and I had confirmed my numbers. The ministry staff clearly told me that there are some 4,600

full-time who work for the minister. We have an announcement today of 2,100 full-time staff being laid off. That does represent almost half of the full-time staff who work at the Ministry of Natural Resources.

That is exactly the question I raised. I will quote to the members what I said: "Today we see that some 2,100 MNR staff will be laid off over the next two years. That represents almost half of the full-time staff working for the ministry."

That is the case, Mr Speaker. That is the information I confirmed before I came in here to raise the question. I resent that the minister is not here today to clarify the record yet again, because the facts I have outlined are correct and what he said in trying to correct his record is still wrong. That is why we do need the business plans, Mr Speaker, because it is obvious that that minister has no idea what's going on in his own ministry.

Interjections.

The Speaker: This House is recessed for 10 minutes.
The House recessed from 1515 to 1525.

Mr Laughren: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: In view of what happened earlier this afternoon when the Chair of Management Board rose to discuss the reductions in the Ontario public service and, as I recall it—I don't have the instant Hansard yet in front of me—he referred to what they were doing as a summary of the business plans of the various ministries. That's what I recall his saying.

It seems to me that if you have a summary of something, you must have the thing itself. What are you summarizing if you have a summary of a business plan? It seems to me there must be a business plan if you have a summary of it.

I believe our privileges have been abused in view of the fact that we're being told two things, and I don't think that's appropriate. It is surely an abuse to be told, "We don't have the business plan, but we have the summary of it." It seems to me that's stretching credulity a long, long way and I resent very much this exercise in public relations that—

The Speaker: Order. We have had a great discussion with regard to points of order and points of privilege. There is a difference of opinion between the opposition and the government and there is a process laid out whereby you deal with that. We have dealt with the back and forth, the issues of the questions and the answers, and I will not entertain any more points of order or points of privilege on that very issue.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Mr Speaker, under section 34, I give notice of dissatisfaction with the Minister of Natural Resources' response to the member for Sudbury East and we will file the necessary documents with the table.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): It has to come from the member who asked the question.

Mr Michael Brown: Where does it say that in the rules, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: There has been a precedent to that effect and it has been ruled on before.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand the position you have taken, but you have left us all somewhat confused in that,

how can we, when a government—when members of the Legislature, who are assumed to be honourable people, come into the House and tell us, when we've been asking questions over the last couple of weeks, that they're going to provide us with all of the information, they're going to do that through business plans, they announce this to all of the people of the province very clearly all this week and all last week, that major announcements are coming, that complete business plans for the government are going to be revealed on Thursday, today, and then we—we have a responsibility, you have a responsibility. You're Speaker second; you're first a member of the assembly. You have a responsibility to represent your constituents as well.

Then we come here today and we're given bits and pieces of information that conflict with one another and we're told: "I'm sorry, we've got partial business plans that we're giving to you or summaries of business plans that we're releasing to the members of the assembly. We don't give a damn that you've been elected to represent your constituents, that you're part of the assembly. We're going to hold off releasing the entire business plans for another month." Because this is all part of a public relations exercise in order to release part of it now, give out the bad news now and then try to cover it up so they can do the tax decrease in a few weeks in the budget.

Mr Speaker, I know you're saying there are opportunities and other avenues to solve this, but I'm at a loss. I'm going through the rule book and I'm at a loss as to how we can resolve that, because the government has clearly decided to try to manipulate the Legislature and manipulate public opinion. It's difficult to continue to use the word "honourable" in this place.

The Speaker: It's not for the Speaker to ascertain the correctness or not of the contents of a statement and of answers or questions. It's not up to me to ascertain that. There's a process here whereby question and answer period is there for you to ask the questions, and it's up to them if they want to answer them. There is a disagreement here between the opposition and the government, and there's nothing I can do about a disagreement. That will be between the House leaders, if they want to meet and solve it, but it's not up to me to solve a disagreement in the House. We have rules and we have a process here laid out with regard to the orders of the day, and that's what I'm following, the orders of the day.

Mr Cooke: Mr Speaker, may I make a suggestion, though, because we've been through this movie before and we don't want to get into a situation as we did before Christmas. Perhaps the reasonable recommendation that was made by members before Christmas could be followed now. That would be that the House adjourn, the House leaders meet and let's find a proper way of dealing with one of the most significant—in fact, the government made it clear earlier this week. The Premier was quoted as saying this is the most important project and set of decisions that this government will make in this term. Therefore we have a right to this information, and I suggest that rather than getting into a huge hassle here in the House, you suggest the House recess, the House leaders meet and let's deal with this in a responsible way.

The Speaker: I would suggest that if the House leaders want to go themselves and meet to try and resolve it, fine, but I see no need to change the process today.

We're now coming on to motions.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You're not helping this.

The Speaker: I'm following the rules.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would certainly agree very much with you when you say that it's not your role, sir, to sort out disagreements between the opposition and the government. I think all of us would quite readily agree that isn't your role. But the concern I and many members of my caucus have is that we have a real problem in knowing how we can do our job in opposition effectively when we see contradictory information being given to us by two different ministers of the same government. That is a fundamental point that needs to be addressed.

We had today, in the Chair of Management Board's statement, a very significant statement, a statement of the nature certainly of a budget in terms of the importance it has, and yet we have very little background information to support that. That's one issue. But within that statement the Chair of Management Board stated that there are over 10,000 public servants who are being laid off. Then one of his colleagues, in answer to a question, said no, that's not quite the case as it relates to his ministry, those people aren't full-time, they're part-time. Then he contradicted himself again.

I think you see how difficult it is for us to then know what it is the ministers are saying and therefore whether we agree, disagree or what position we can take on those. I think in that, Mr Speaker, you do have a role to play, not in determining what the truth is, but in suggesting that surely there is a process through which at least the members of the government, the ministers of the government who are bringing statements to this House can agree as to what that information is, as it pertains to the same ministry, so that we don't have one minister saying one thing and another minister saying another thing which contradicts that.

The Speaker: I'll say, once again, it's not my place to determine what the answers are, whether they're right or whether they're wrong. I'm here to chair the House. We have rules of order to follow. We have a process here to follow. We have a place for points of order and a place for points of privilege, of which many have been raised on one issue today. I have heard many of those points of order and I have to find that there is no point of order as far as I'm concerned in my role as Speaker. We move on to motions.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: If it's the same point of order, I'm ruling you out of order. If it's on the same point of order—no, no.

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, I stand on a point of order—

The Speaker: On the same point of order?

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, I stand on a point of order pursuant to standing order 23(m). I ask you to refer yourself to standing order 23(m), because standing order

23(m) deals directly with introduction of any matter in debate. I submit, with respect, Speaker, that "debate" here has to be interpreted broadly. That means any proceedings that occur during the course of this House, including the process of question period. We're talking here about an offence to "the practices and precedents of the House." The precedents and the practices of the House go beyond the mere procedure in terms of orders of the day. I respectfully submit to you, Speaker, that it is not only a practice but a long-standing precedent—and again I could spend a great deal of time referring to precedents spoken of in Erskine May, among other authorities, but I'm not going to use your time doing that.

Speaker, please. What we have here—because this is the vehicle, this is the voice of the people of Ontario, and indeed when we see its automation and the technology applied by virtue of television, it goes beyond the mere fourth and fifth estates, utilizing their presence here to convey what's happening.

It's a public place. People are entitled to come here to this chamber to discover what the business is of the government. I appreciate it and I'm conceding that the government can hold its cards close to its chest if it so chooses. At the same time, the opposition can from time to time throw its money into the pot to call the hand just to keep the government honest.

But in this instance the government has chosen to lay its cards on the table, so to speak, and when there is an inherent contradiction in such an important process as that very restricted but time-honoured process of question period—and I'm not asking you to rule on the propriety or sufficiency or adequacy of a minister's response to a question from a member of the opposition. I'm asking you to consider this, because here we have this vehicle, this forum as being the voice not just of government, but in view of the fact that there's opposition here, the voice of some 11 million Ontarians. Ontarians are entitled to come here to understand what is being unfolded before them.

When we saw and heard, as did 11 million Ontarians—we have to presume that indeed that is the case—an inherent contradiction in what was said very specifically by not one, of course, but by two members of the crown, I submit to you, Speaker, that that goes far beyond, with respect, the mere inadequacy of a question. I agree, a person—and you've ruled with respect to a member of the official opposition—who asks a question, at the very least, is entitled to call for a proverbial late show. But in this instance, you have an obligation, I respectfully submit to you, Speaker, to require that there be a clarification.

Your job is, among other things, to preserve order. Disorder doesn't mean just bawdiness and physical disorder; preserving order implies very much as well that one of your jobs is to ensure that when there are specific messages being given, that they be clear, that they be succinct—and I'm trying to be succinct, Speaker—but when ministers of the crown contradict each other—Speaker, please, I am not entitled to stand up and speak of one or the other ministers as prevaricating. I understand that and I wouldn't think of doing that, but that's where your role is significant, because it is a matter of

practice and precedent that members of this assembly—all the more so, I submit, members who are ministers of the crown—put forth their information in a truthful and unambiguous way.

This isn't a matter of the opposition disagreeing with what one or another minister said; this is a matter of the people of Ontario witnessing an inherent contradiction—

The Speaker: Order. The member has made his point of order. That will be the end of that.

The member for Algoma on a point of privilege.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I stand to raise a point of privilege in strict sincerity. I honestly believe that my privileges as a member of this House and the privileges of all members of the House have been abridged.

It's surely the responsibility of each member of the assembly to serve her or his constituents in this place by attempting to put forward positions as clearly and honestly as possible and getting information for constituents about the ongoing operations of government and the ramifications for their communities. I honestly believe that in this case, where we have an obvious contradiction between two ministers, it is impossible for me to be able to tell what the announcement today means—whether 10,600 positions means 10,600 or something less or something more—and what that means not only for the Ministry of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines but for all of the ministries for which business plans are either being developed or have been developed. That is not clear either.

This must be clarified. The government must make it clear to the public of Ontario and to the members of this House what exactly has been announced today, otherwise we will not be able to deal with the issue properly in this House or in the public.

The Speaker: Order. It will be up to the government to do that. It's not for me to see that it's done. Let's move on to motions.

1540

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I find myself as well very concerned by what has unfolded here today. I represent a very important constituency in northern Ontario, not the only important constituency in that great part of the province; I'm only one of about 13 members down here. The decisions that are made today on these 2,100 jobs, perhaps plus—we're not sure at this time—put the economy of northern Ontario in jeopardy. We who have responsibility to give leadership in that neck of the woods need to know the numbers—we need to know the numbers yesterday—so we can start putting in place plans that will mitigate, that will answer some of the questions that some of our constituents have so they can get on with their lives so our communities can survive.

Twenty-one hundred workers may not seem like a whole lot in an area like Metro Toronto, although I suggest to you it is, but 2,100 jobs in northern Ontario represent the sum total of the workforce of, say, Blind River, Chappleau and Wawa all put together. It's significant; it's really important. In light of the decision that was made yesterday re the downsizing of this place and the number of reps who will be elected by the people of particularly northern Ontario—

The Speaker: Order. I've heard the member's point of privilege. The member for Lake Nipigon.

M. Gilles Pouliot (Lac-Nipigon): J'aimerais attirer votre attention, ainsi que l'attention de mes distingués collègues, sur quelque chose qui est tout à fait regrettable. Aujourd'hui plus tôt, il y a à peine une heure, un ministre annonçait qu'on anticipait non moins de 10 600 emplois perdus, répartis sur une période de deux ans.

Juste après un collègue, un autre ministre, annonçait qu'à travers son ministère, celui des Ressources, qui est si cher chez nous, sur une force de travail de quelque 4600 employés à peu près on allait limoger, on allait licencier 45 % ; c'est donc dire environ 2100 employés.

Je représente, comme vous le savez si bien, une circonscription qui couvre 26 % du territoire. Quand on fait une telle annonce à travers la contradiction chez nous, on commence à mourir un peu. Chez nous, c'est le pain quotidien. Nous dépendons tous de nos ressources et de la représentation du ministère.

The Speaker: Order. I've heard your point of privilege. It's not a point of privilege, it's a dispute you're having between the government and the opposition parties, and there's nothing I can do to stop a dispute.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I move that the standing committee on social development be authorized to meet on the mornings of Wednesday, April 17, and Wednesday, April 24, for the purpose of conducting public hearings on Bill 30, the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, and Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of April 15, 1996.

On Monday, April 15, we will debate a motion for interim supply and then go on to the 1995-96 Supply Act.

On Tuesday, April 16, we will continue those debates, the motion for interim supply and the Supply Act, after which we will debate Bill 42, An Act to reform MPPs' pensions, to eliminate tax-free allowances and to adjust MPPs' compensation levels.

On Wednesday, April 17, we will continue with second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act.

For Thursday morning's private members' business, we will consider ballot item number 21, standing in the name of the member for Riverdale, and ballot item number 22, standing in the name of the member for Dufferin-Peel. In the afternoon of Thursday, April 18, we will continue with debate on Bill 34.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that the North York Branson Hospital merge with the York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

Mr Speaker, I've affixed my signature.

ADJOURNMENT MOTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Mr Speaker, in view of the fact that the government refuses to provide this House with the business plans behind their announcement today and you can't do anything about it, I move adjournment of this House.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The motion is in order. Mrs Lankin moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; it will be a 30-minute bell. I believe.

The division bells rang from 1548 to 1618.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Ms Lankin's motion will please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 22, the nays 38.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I move that we proceed to orders of the day.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; it will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1621 to 1651.

The Speaker: The member for Durham East has moved that we proceed to orders of the day.

All those in favour of that motion will please rise.

All those opposed will please rise.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47, the nays 21.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS ÉCRITES

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to raise a point of order under "Written Questions," standing order 97(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e). Mr Speaker, as you would know, we are permitted as members to table written questions. Standing order 97 says:

"(a) Questions seeking information from the ministry relating to the public affairs of the province may be placed by notice on the Orders and Notices paper.

"(b) Such notices shall be dated and where a member repeats an unanswered question in the ensuing session, the date of the original notice shall be shown.

"(c) In putting any written question, no argument or opinion shall be offered nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain the question.

"(d) The minister shall answer such written questions within 14 calendar days unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming or that he or she declines to answer, in which case a notation shall be made on the Orders and Notices paper following the question indicating that the minister has made an interim answer, the approximate date that the information will be available, or that the minister has declined to answer, as the case may be.

"(e) The answers to such written questions shall be given to the Clerk of the House who shall cause them to be printed in the official reports of the debates, or if any such answers are of a lengthy and voluminous nature, the Clerk shall make them returns."

Mr Speaker, as you have said many times in the Legislature, it is your job and it is your responsibility, it is entirely your responsibility, to make sure the standing orders of the Legislature are followed. You know they have not been followed in this case.

I would draw you to order paper question 99, tabled November 15, 1995, standing in my name. "Inquiry of the Ministry: Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many GWA recipients who have part-time earnings under the supports to employment program (STEP) have been disintitiled to GWA since October 1, 1995, because their earnings are too high." That's a pretty straightforward question, tabled now five months ago. No reply.

Mr Speaker, I'm asking you, as the only individual who can enforce the standing orders and have told us this many times, what you're prepared to do to enforce the rule when it comes to question number 99.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I thank the honourable member for his point of order. Yes, he has a very important point of order, and I would hope the appropriate ministry he referred to would take it as notice and reply immediately.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect to the same standing order, I would like to raise a separate point of order, and

that's with respect to order paper question number 100, standing in the name of Mr Cooke. It was an inquiry of the ministry, and I'll read it:

"Would the Ministry of Community and Social Services advise how many FBA recipients who have part-time earnings under STEP have been disentitled to FBA since October 1, 1995, because their earnings are too high."

That was tabled on November 15, 1995.

Mr Speaker, day after day in this House we ask questions of the Minister of Community and Social Services. I know you can't police the answers of the minister here in this House, and when there's not satisfaction with those answers we're always told we have the opportunity, we have the process available to us to follow up, requesting information of the ministry, of the minister, in other ways.

We have followed those rules of this House. We have tabled order paper questions in accordance with the standing orders, with the rules of this House, and we find that we still get no satisfactory response from this minister. I will tell you that there are other ministers who are in the same situation, other questions that remain unanswered, and it's I think appropriate that they should be raised with you as well.

Specific to this one, as we hear the Minister of Community and Social Services tell us he's moving forward with changes to the Ontario Works, the welfare system, introducing his workfare plan, and telling us it is specifically designed to keep the commitment they made, when they made their cuts to the welfare rates, that people will be able to earn back that amount of money, we have asked questions specific to that. In this order paper question, we put that question very clearly to them in November of last year. We remain without that information although it's committed to us that people can in fact earn that money back. That information is important for us as opposition members to be able to represent our constituents, to be able to provide them with information—

The Speaker: Order. I thank you for bringing it to my attention. It is a point of order and I would ask the appropriate minister—

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 97, which states:

"(a) Questions seeking information from the ministry relating to the public affairs of the province may be placed by notice on the Orders and Notices paper.

"(b) Such notices shall be dated and where a member repeats" a numbered "question in the ensuing session, the date of the original notice shall be shown."

I know, of course, Mr Speaker, that the appropriate form in putting a point of order to this assembly is to lay the standing order groundwork to accompany raising the point of order; one shouldn't merely raise points of order without referring to the sections which give rise to the point of order.

"(d) The minister shall answer such written questions within 14 calendar days unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming or that he or she declines to answer, in which case a notation shall be made on the Orders and

Notices paper following the question indicating that the minister has made an interim answer, the approximate date that the information will be available, or that the minister has declined to answer, as the case may be.

"(e) The answers to the written questions shall be given to the Clerk of the House who shall cause them to be printed in the official reports of the debates, or if any such answers are of a lengthy and voluminous nature, the Clerk shall make them returns."

I'll decline to read paragraph (f) because paragraph (f) of this standing order isn't particularly germane to the point of order I'm raising now. But paragraph (f) does state, "If a minister is of the opinion that any written question under this standing order requires by way of reply any statement of facts, or records, or statistics of a lengthy or a voluminous nature, the minister may require it to be made a motion for a return."

1700

The Speaker: Thank you. I've heard your point of order and you do have a point of order.

Mr Kormos: Please, I haven't referred to the question yet.

The Speaker: Just a minute. I've heard your point of order and you do have a point of order. I agree with it. The appropriate ministry will look after it.

Mr Kormos: On a point of privilege, Speaker, please.

The Speaker: Order. When I call order, I expect the member to take his seat.

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: The precedents and the procedures require me, as I understand it, to lay out that portion of the standing orders or parliamentary precedent which sustain or give rise to the point of order. I laid out, as I believe I'm required to do with respect to the rules of this House, the groundwork, the foundation, that basis for the point of order.

I have a point of order. Of course, I have only made reference to the standing orders. I very specifically want to direct the Speaker's attention to the query that was posed, to which I say there is a matter of a breach of order. I believe I'm entitled to do that, sir. Were I not entitled to do that, the point of order would be null. There wouldn't be any substance to it. There'd be a foundation but no walls and no roof.

Please, Speaker, may I refer to the question, because there is a very specific question. Otherwise, we're talking in a vacuum, we're dancing in the fog, and Lord knows, we wouldn't want to do that. May I please direct the Speaker's attention—

The Speaker: Take your seat, please. You have spent two or three minutes and I have not heard the point of order that you're wanting to make. If you'd like to make your point of order, I'd like to hear it.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate the courtesy of the Chair, of the Speaker of the House, in permitting me to do that.

The point of order is pursuant to standing order 97 and the paragraphs I read, which I will not read again because I've read them once already. On November 15, 1995, my colleague from Windsor-Riverside, in his own right and on behalf of this caucus of which I am still a member, made an inquiry of the ministry. I should read the inquiry: "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise what is the threshold at which a single

person with part-time earnings under STEP no longer qualifies for social assistance benefits." That was dated November 15, 1995. It's number 101 in the list of questions as printed in the Orders and Notices for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, first session, 36th Parliament, most recently as Tuesday, April 9, 1996.

There has been no response to that. That is not an inquiry requiring any great deal of research. I submit, Speaker, in response to this point of order, it is your responsibility to censure, to possibly even suspend the minister from service in this House until that's responded to.

The Speaker: Thank you. I've heard your point of order.

A further point of order?

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, I won't refer again to the appropriate standing order, because you've heard it, but there is a question on the order paper in the name of Mr Cooke, one of our more industrious members of this Assembly, I'm sure you would all agree, and it's dated November 15, 1995. So that we're all perfectly clear what it is we're debating, it reads as follows: "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise what is the threshold at which a sole-support parent with one child, who has part-time earnings under STEP, no longer qualifies for social assistance benefits."

That is an important question, and the thought of that being on the order paper from November 15 until today is outrageous. I'm sure you would agree that is an infringement on the privileges of the members of this House. It's not as though it's a frivolous question. It's an important question and one to which all of us have a right to an answer.

I can certainly recall that when the previous government was in office, we were taken to task if we missed the deadline on questions. As a matter of fact, the Speaker might have called us to task from time to time on that very matter, because he too was an industrious member of this Legislature.

Mr Speaker, I hope you'll regard these points of order not as anything to do with what's gone on in the House earlier today but simply as an issue of the privileges of this House. We've kept waiting and waiting and waiting, anticipating every day that these questions would be answered in written form, and that still has not occurred. What's really disappointing is that we have this question unanswered, compounded by the failure of the government to table its business plans for the announcements that were made today.

The Speaker: The member does have a point of order and it should be referred to the appropriate ministry.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I draw your attention to standing order 23, which says, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:... (c) Persists in needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session."

I wonder if you could give me some direction in your first ruling to the question raised by Mr Cooke. I took it to be an omnibus, overriding dictum that in terms of any question on the order paper more than two weeks, you were giving notice to the relevant ministry—

The Speaker: Order. I know the section you're referring to and it has no basis in what we're dealing with. The points of order are in order.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Mr Speaker, I would like to rise on the same point of order. Following up from my colleague from Nickel Belt, it is true that not only was the former government called to task on numerous occasions with respect to this same issue, but our government was also called to task by the same group that now sits in government. This group that sits in government was vociferous in going after us with respect to unanswered questions on the order paper. I would encourage my colleague from Scarborough East to take a good look at some of the Hansard under our previous government and he will see how much time and how much of the taxpayers' money was wasted by his colleagues who are now in government on this same issue.

I would have thought that his colleagues would have learned from our mistake, obviously, in government and would have tried to fix it, but here we are, Mr Speaker, raising with you a very important point, which is that ministers of this government have refused to provide information to very important and very serious issues our party has raised, particularly with respect to the minister of social services and particularly with respect to the very serious and deep cuts he has imposed upon families and children in this province.

The order paper question I would like to bring to your attention is order paper question 103. It is an inquiry of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and it reads as follows: "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise what is the threshold at which a sole-support parent with two children, who has part-time earnings under STEP, no longer qualifies for social assistance benefits?"

I would point out to you that this question was provided to the minister by my colleague from Windsor-Riverside on November 15, 1995. Here we are, several months later, having to stand in this House and raise this point with you, because this minister is being—

The Speaker: Order. You do have a point of order. When the point of order is raised, I would expect that you would read me the result of what you're asking for them to reply to.

1710

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Mr Cooke, on November 15 last, was in a prolific mood, for there was so much to be said. Used the standing order; meticulously addressed the concern; did so under number 104. To what ministry? The Ministry of Community and Social Services, to "advise what is the threshold...." Mr Cooke here is seeking an answer for the marginalized, the disabled, and he goes on as follows: "...advise what is the threshold at which a disabled person"—we're all on the waiting list—"who has part-time earnings under STEP"—recall the program that gave hope to people, gave them a chance to be like the others, to defend themselves, to integrate—"no longer qualifies for social assistance benefits."

Je connais ces gens. C'est lui, notre leader parlementaire, qui se chargeait de le faire. Il le fait sous la gestion suivante. «Questions : Les questions seront publiées le

jour suivant leur réception et tous les jours de la semaine. Elles seront ensuite publiées tous les lundis jusqu'à ce qu'une réponse autre qu'une réponse provisoire soit reçue. Une question publiée le jeudi pour la première fois sera publiée tous les jours de la semaine suivante.»

Eh bien, le 15 novembre 1995. Décembre, janvier, deux mois ; février, mars, avril, cinq mois que les gens les plus démunis, les plus vulnérables et marginalisés attendent une réponse du ministère. Monsieur le Président, quand même.

The Speaker: Thank you. Second order.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to bring to your attention what I believe is a breach of standing order 97, and I won't repeat the provisions of that; I think you know them quite well. But there is a question that was tabled back on November 15 by my colleague Mr Dave Cooke. It's item number 105 under the written questions: "Inquiry of the ministry: Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many calls have been received by the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 2, 1995."

That was tabled back on November 15, 1995, almost five months ago. To date, there has been no response. It's a question which, as a former minister in that portfolio, I have some particular interest in, and I believe that five months' time would have been more than sufficient for the minister to give us some response. We have yet not seen any response, although the minister has on various occasions stood in his place and made a series of announcements about various ways in which he is tightening eligibility for social assistance. And yet on this important question—I think in fact this was the first announcement the minister made in this House in his current role—we asked, or the honourable Dave Cooke asked—

The Speaker: Order. I've heard you read it and it's in order.

The member on a point of what?

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : On a point of order. Monsieur le Président, je veux amener votre attention, puis je ne vais pas lire toute la section selon le Règlement, mais cela dit, «Les députés peuvent faire inscrire au Feuilleton et Avis des questions adressées à des ministres en vue d'obtenir des renseignements sur quelque affaire publique.»

Je ne vais pas lire toute la section, mais la question que je voudrais soulever ici sous le rappel au Règlement, c'est que si «le ministre répond dans les 14 jours civils qui suivent aux questions écrites ainsi posées, sauf s'il indique qu'un délai prolongé est nécessaire parce que la réponse sera coûteuse ou longue à formuler, ou encore s'il refuse de donner une réponse, et une inscription est faite au Feuilleton et Avis à l'endroit de la question indiquant, selon le cas, que le ministre a donné une réponse provisoire, ainsi que la date approximative» — on voit que le 2 octobre 1995, et on ne parle pas d'hier, M. Cooke a fait une enquête auprès du ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires qui demande combien d'appels en moyenne ont été reçus au ministère selon la «welfare fraud hotline» depuis le 2 octobre 1995. On se trouve aujourd'hui au milieu du mois d'avril et on a fait cette demande-là en octobre 1995.

On vous demande, Monsieur le Président, de voir à ce que le gouvernement fasse ce qui est indiqué dans le Règlement des affaires parlementaires et qu'il réponde à la question.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): On a point or order, Mr Speaker: I raise the issue of section 97(a) with regard to question 107, wherein the Minister of Community and Social Services is asked, "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many calls made to the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 2, 1995, have been investigated; ie, followed up." That was filed November 15, 1995.

I think it's extremely relevant and important for you to pay attention to the fact that the government when it announced this hotline did it with great fanfare and suggested that this was going to be one of the key solutions that it saw to dealing with the concerns that it has about costs in this ministry. Yet we have seen to date no response whatsoever to this question. As we've heard from other members of my caucus, they have not responded to other questions on this matter and others.

Given the fact that the government itself made this such a priority at the time it announced it, it would seem, one would think, that responding to a question like this would be equally important as the government attempts to defend itself with regard to questions we have raised about this. Mr Speaker, as you know, we all have an interest in making sure that the taxpayers' money is well spent, that it's properly spent, that it's focused in the areas that it needs to, which of course was the reason the government said it was introducing this hotline.

However, our concerns have been around whether this was a serious attempt to keep legitimate costs in line or whether indeed this was just another part of the government's attack on the poor in this province, which of course we have, I believe, shown very clearly is indeed the agenda of this government right from its first announcement that it was cutting welfare rates by 22%, and yet in response to this question we hear a deafening silence. I think it's fair, Mr Speaker, that we would ask the government, and through you, to respond to these questions that are being asked.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a point of order from section 97(a). The member for Windsor-Riverside made an inquiry of the ministry which reads: "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many calls made to the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 2, 1995, concern actual welfare (both GWA and FBA) recipients. November 15, 1995."

I raise this because there have been many, many inquiries to this particular ministry for several months, since 1995, and I raise it because these questions are of great concern to those of us who are feeling more and more that welfare recipients are under attack in this province.

1720

This hotline was set up and there have been statements made from time to time that seem to imply that all welfare recipients are either cheats or lazy bums who have to be forced to get back in the workforce. This is of great concern—

The Speaker: Order. Have you read the motion? Thank you.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: Under subsection 97(a), order question 110, my friend and colleague from Windsor-Riverside has put the question to the Minister of Community and Social Services, in fact a number of questions. As you can see, all of my colleagues have raised these questions because they're concerned about the questions we have asked the minister. They arise out of what the public raises as fears and concerns they have, and it's a whole catalogue of requests. This question here from Mr Cooke, an inquiry to the ministry, where it asks, "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many police investigations have been initiated as a result of calls made to the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 1995," was submitted November 15, 1995.

Mr Speaker, the minister has a duty to answer these questions because the public is very concerned about these kinds of questions that we have raised. If we don't get the answers from the minister, the public continues to be worried about these questions and you have a duty too, Mr Speaker, to urge them to respond as quickly as they can on these matters.

The Speaker: The member for London Centre on the same point of order?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Yes, on standing order 97(a), I would like to give you notice that a question that was raised by Mr Cooke on November 15, 1995, number 109, has also not been answered. Mr Speaker, this is a very important one because we hear the Minister of Community and Social Services talking and today got more information about the expectation that we would see a lowering of the amount of provincial support to social assistance as a result of cracking down on these rules.

The question that Mr Cooke asked was, "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many social assistance recipients have been disintitled as a result of calls made to the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 2, 1995."

That's a very important question. It certainly has relevance and bearing on the kind of savings that the government, in its report today, is claiming to be making. I believe the minister should be answering this question for all of our information because if all this rhetoric about people defrauding the system is not so, then those savings are not going to result. We really are entitled to know how many people have been disintitled as a result of this move that was introduced with great fanfare.

I would ask, Mr Speaker, that you again ask the minister to respond to this question.

The Speaker: Thank you. The member for Sudbury East on a new point of order?

Ms Martel: On the same point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: You have made a point of order with regard to section 97.

Ms Martel: On the same issue, a new point of order: I would like to raise with you the problem of yet another order paper question that has not been responded to,

either by this government or by the Minister of Community and Social Services.

It follows up from the concern that was raised by my colleague from London, and she specifically was concerned about how many people to date have been disintitled from benefits as a result of calls made to the ministry around the issue of fraud.

I want to follow up on this idea of fraud and specifically refer to the question that my—

The Speaker: Order. Would the member have a specific question on the order paper she would like to refer to?

Ms Martel: Yes, I do, Mr Speaker. It was an order paper question that was submitted by my colleague from Windsor-Riverside, Mr Cooke, on November 15, 1995.

The Speaker: Order. The member has already raised that point of order. Is there another one? Would you identify the number on the order paper?

Ms Martel: I'm just getting to that. It's order paper question number 111 and it refers to fraud charges. Specifically, my colleague the member for Windsor-Riverside directed this inquiry to the Minister of Community and Social Services. It reads as follows:

"111. Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many fraud charges have been laid as a result of calls made to the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 2, 1995."

This is an important question, Mr Speaker, because you will recall that very early in October the Minister of Community and Social Services, with much fanfare, announced in this House and announced publicly a fraud hotline that they were establishing in an effort to crack down on unworthy welfare recipients. Not only was that number announced here in the House, but it was sent out to a number of social services offices around the province, to constituency offices, and was posted in other public places so that members of the public could—

The Speaker: I will accept you and your number that you have. If you're dissatisfied with question number 111 of Mr Cooke, the inquiry to the ministry, I would appreciate it if you would read me what that question is, and that will be it.

Ms Martel: Mr Speaker, I will read it to you again. It is a request by Mr Cooke, my colleague from Windsor-Riverside, an inquiry of the ministry which reads as follows:

"111. Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise how many fraud charges have been laid as a result of calls made to the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 2, 1995."

That question was submitted to the minister on November 15, 1995. We have yet to receive a response to a question that I think was very important, considering how much fanfare was around the announcement regarding the welfare fraud hotline. I suspect that the reason we haven't gotten a response is because there probably haven't been any fraud charges, or a very small number.

The Speaker: Thank you. I have had the opportunity to review some of the questions on the order paper and I find that there are many questions on the order paper that have not been answered, nor has there been any

indication that they're going to be answered. I would take it under advisement that all of these questions are on the order paper and I would urge the ministers to take what's happening here in this House this afternoon and I would ask all ministers to look into it. I would think that the issue could be closed, now that I've ruled that all the questions on the order paper should be answered.

Mr Pouliot: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect, I am seeking to be recognized. I thank you very kindly. You're right. With the highest of respect, you've heard my eloquent colleague the member for Sudbury East focus on how many fraud charges; I wish to go to 112 and focus on how many people. Let me read it into the record because it's very important. I know that you share in the sorrow, that you share in my concern. We're talking about errors of omission; we're talking about repetitive neglect. It becomes a political lifestyle with them.

Mr Cooke will not be denied. The resolve is there. We know his track record, speaking on behalf of people, in inquiries of the ministry: "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services"—time and time again under 112 he knocks at his door and says: "Minister, give me an answer. This is the question: 'How many people have been charged as a result of calls made to the province's welfare fraud hotline since October 2, 1995?'" Again November 15, la date fatidique, 1995. To date, Mr Speaker, no response.

1730

Mr Silipo: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have been raising a number of points relating to the Minister of Community and Social Services and his failure to answer questions, although those questions were tabled almost five months ago.

I want to raise a different point on a similar issue with respect to another minister of this government, and that is the Minister of Education and Training. I want to refer you, Mr Speaker, to order paper question 115, and I think it's a very timely one, given the events that have taken place this afternoon, because that question standing in the name of my interim leader, Mr Wildman—

Mr Pouliot: Fine gentleman.

Mr Silipo: —a fine gentleman and a fine representative for Algoma, says:

"Inquiry of the ministry—Would the Minister of Education and Training provide"—I think this is important, Mr Speaker—"the percentage of persons who hold valid teaching certificates and are employed by public and separate school boards in Ontario who teach students. What percentage of all personnel who are employed by school boards across the province actually teach students in primary and secondary schools."

That is a question that was tabled on November 22, 1995. As you know, Mr Speaker, I spent some time in that ministry. I would think that information—I know in fact that information is readily available in the Ministry of Education, and I find it passing strange that we have yet to hear from the Minister of Education and Training on this question that was asked four and a half months ago.

The Speaker: I've heard the member's point of order and I would urge the minister to respond.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, in regard to section 97(a): Standing in the name of Mr Cooke, in question number 142, an inquiry was made to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I see the date on that was November 22, 1995, and as you know, Mr Speaker, this should have been responded to some months ago. I just want to bring to your attention that it seems this particular question in the name of Mr Cooke directed the inquiry to the Minister of Community and Social Services in regard to the question of workfare, and it reads as follows:

"Mr Cooke—Inquiry of the ministry—Would the Minister of Community and Social Services advise what service agencies or community organizations have contacted the ministry to express an interest in participating in workfare programs."

As you know, this issue is now before the House, and to have the answers to these questions I think is paramount for the people of Ontario to be able to understand what government plans are coming forward, and as I say, this dates back to November 22, 1995, and what the—

The Speaker: Yes, the member has a point of order, and I would urge the minister to look into it.

Mr Kormos: I'm rising on a point of order, Speaker, and it's with respect to standing order 97, paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f). Of course, in view of the standing order under which I rise, I want to draw your attention to an inquiry made of the ministry and an inquiry that has been appropriately noted as a question on the Orders and Notices for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for the first session of the 36th Parliament. It's an inquiry that Mr Cooke, who's the member for Windsor-Riverside, presented.

The Speaker: Which number are you referring to?

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, I can't hear a darn thing.

The Speaker: Would the member refer to which—

Mr Kormos: I'm trying to, but people are talking to my left in the rump.

As I say, Mr Cooke, the member for Windsor-Riverside, as an inquiry of the ministry, put this question on November 22, 1995, which is, as has been noted, not just a while ago, but a long time ago. Of course, in your determination of my point of order, the Speaker is entitled, in my respectful submission, to consider the complexity of the question and the speed with which a reasonable person could expect it to be responded to, and the question Mr Cooke, member for Windsor-Riverside, put to Minister David Tsubouchi was:

"Would the Minister of Community and Social Services inform the House what the terms of reference are for the review—"

Mr Silipo: The member opposite would like you to slow down a little bit.

Mr Kormos: I'm sorry. Speaker, this is being translated by the French-language translation staff, who work very hard, and of course I'm speaking—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Speaker, may I please speak without interruption.

The Speaker: Number 143 is a rather short one. I wonder if the member would please read it and then we will carry on with another one.

Mr Kormos: I don't want the French-language translation people to be inconvenienced. The question that was put was, "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services inform the House what the terms of reference are for the review announced on November 2, 1995, that the 'ministry is in the early stages right now of doing an overall review of the child care area...to be done under the able leadership'"—I'm sorry, that's what it says, Speaker—

The Speaker: The member does have a point of order, and I would ask the minister to look into the point of order the member has raised. Would the member take his seat, please.

Ms Churley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, under section 97(a) of the standing rules of order: Inquiry 144 by Mr Cooke, the member for Windsor-Riverside, was to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Again, this particular inquiry was on the so-called child review the minister announced some very long time ago. Of course, we don't have the results of that so-called review yet.

Number 144 reads, "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services inform the House what the budget is for the review of child care announced on November 2, 1995, that the 'ministry is in the early stages right now of doing an overall review of the child care area...to be done'"—get this—"under the able leadership of my parliamentary assistant, Janet Ecker." Dated November 22, 1995.

The Speaker: The member for Fort York, do you have a point of order?

Mr Marchese: Yes, Mr Speaker, I do, under section 97(a).

The Speaker: Yes, referring to which order paper?
Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, I realize that you seem to be impatient, and I know some of the members appear to be impatient with some of these order questions. I appreciate that, but as you can see, we have a catalogue of questions and a catalogue of inquiries that have been made that have not been responded to. It's a problem for us, and it's a problem for the public, obviously, from which these questions and inquiries come, because they want to know and the ministers are not responding. That's a problem to me and to those who are asking the same types of questions.

The question—
Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It's coming. The question that has been asked by the member for Windsor-Riverside reads, "Would the Minister of Community and Social Services inform the House if there are any other members of the review team announced on November 2, 1995, that the 'ministry is in the early stages right now of doing an overall review of the child care area...to be done under the able leadership of my parliamentary assistant, Janet Ecker.'"

1740

This is another inquiry. There have been many inquiries. We want to know the answers. It's an easy inquiry. It's not complicated, yet it's taking the minister a great deal of time to—

The Speaker: Order. The member does have a point of order and I would refer that the ministry would certainly look into these.

Mr Gilchrist: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I too am concerned that due to the workload that's been on all the ministers during the recent troubles here, the labour discussions and all the other work being done for the business plan, some questions have not been answered according to the two-week timetable. I would direct to your attention that questions 146, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184 and 185 are the outstanding questions on the order paper beyond two weeks. I would encourage you to request the ministers, at their earliest opportunity, to provide an answer or to decline one.

The Speaker: The member does have a point of order. I will request the ministers and encourage them and urge them to answer those questions.

Mr Pouliot: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect, sometimes when you are in a hurry, you don't give the diligence and the attention that those very serious concerns deserve. You miss things. You reach into the hat and there are no more rabbits, so you miss. For instance, I draw your attention to a matter of importance, very serious: "Inquiry of the ministry—Would each minister provide details of all communications consulting contracts awarded by the ministry since July 1, 1995." Of course, I'm referring to 202, April 9, 1996. It's not due yet, but we want to make sure there will be a change of form and that 202 will be addressed before the deadline.

The Speaker: Order. Question 202 is not out of order. You're out of order. The inquiry is not out of order.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In due diligence, I don't think the member opposite had sufficient time to be able to properly list before the House all the various questions that haven't been answered that were put before the government much time ago. I would just say, if the members opposite are losing patience, imagine how we feel. We've been waiting five months for these and I think we've been very patient up to this point. If the government ministers would have responded in time, as per the standing orders, we wouldn't be in this situation.

I want to bring to your attention, Mr Speaker, that on November 22, 1995, in the name of Mr Cooke, there was an inquiry that was made to the ministry—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Scarborough East has raised a point of order and has indicated—when the Speaker is standing, I would appreciate it if the member would take his seat.

The member for Scarborough East has read the inquiry numbers up to the ones that are out of order. He has read each one of them and they are out of order. I would urge the ministries responsible for answering those questions to do it immediately.

Mr Kormos: Point of privilege, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Orders of the day.

Mr Kormos: Point of privilege, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: There is nothing out of order.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act.

Mr Kormos: Point of privilege.

The Speaker: The member on a point of privilege.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rose and politely asked to be able to rise on a point of privilege. I make reference of course to the standing rules of order, and that is: "The Speaker shall"—and I tell you, sir, with respect, that "shall" is an imperative—"preserve order and decorum, and shall"—once again, sir, with due respect, that is an imperative—"decide questions of privilege and points of order." I'm referring to standing order 13(a), sir. "In making a decision on a question of privilege or point of order or explaining a practice, the Speaker may state the applicable standing order or authority."

I rise on privilege, because I tell you, sir, it is not merely—and if I may juxtapose standing order 13, to which I just made reference, with standing order 97(a)—

The Speaker: Order. I would like to read to the member the standing order he referred to, standing order 13(a). It says:

"The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum, and shall decide questions of privilege and points of order. In making a decision on a question of privilege or point of order or explaining a practice, the Speaker may state the applicable standing order or authority."

There's nothing out of order. The orders of the day have been called.

Mr Kormos: Speaker, I stood on a point of privilege.

The Speaker: You have a point of privilege?

Mr Kormos: Privilege, as you know, sir—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: I'm sorry, sir, once again I can't hear a word you're saying. I stand on a point of privilege, because I'm not going to suggest for the briefest of moments that this is a simple issue. I'm speaking—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: It's awfully difficult to speak to this point of privilege when I'm constantly being interrupted by other members of the assembly. Please, Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: I stand on a point of privilege, and this is the kind of respect this House has for a breach of privilege?

In any event, I made reference to standing order 13 because of course standing order 13 conjoins your status with respect to determining order as well as privilege, and of course privilege takes precedence. Now, here I was. With respect, I submit that there's been some confusion. The mere fact that these questions are listed in the Orders and Notices paper has deluded—not diluted, but deluded—some members into believing that it is a point of order.

Speaker, if I may, the questions are put forward, and they're put forward publicly. The reason for the time frame in terms of a response is so that one can, regardless of where one sits in this assembly, take note of the questions. The reason they're published is so that one can take note and expect there to be an answer tabled within a reasonable period of time.

My point of privilege, sir—

The Speaker: I don't find the member has a point of privilege when he's referring to the inquiries made of the

ministries when we have dealt with those inquiries and I have ruled on them. I don't find the member has a point of privilege, because they have been dealt with, the orders of the day have been called, and Mr Wildman—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I had indicated that the orders of the day had been called. Mr Wildman has the floor when debate comes. You have a point of privilege, and I would like to hear your point of privilege.

Mr Kormos: Please, Speaker, these are not unimportant things. In any event, I was trying to direct the Speaker's attention to standing order 13 in relationship to standing order 97, paragraphs (a) through (f). I was asking the Speaker, and I ask the Speaker again, to please consider that there may well have been some confusion about the point to be raised in response to a failure to respond to the questions in an appropriate time.

The Speaker: Order. We have dealt with those questions at the appropriate time, and I don't find that you have a point of privilege with regard to referring to the questions of the inquiry.

1750

Mr Kormos: I'm telling you, Speaker, I'm trying to lay out the groundwork to ask the Speaker to consider a case where I believe my privileges as a member of this Legislative Assembly have been contravened, and I think it behooves—

The Speaker: Order. We have a member who is speaking to the debate. I don't see anything out of order. We're into debate.

Interjections.

The Speaker: If the member has a point of privilege he wants to raise, we're into the debate. If you want to raise your point of privilege quickly, you can do it, but we're into the debate.

Mrs Boyd: We're not in the debate. He was not recognized.

The Speaker: Order. The orders of the day have been called. We are into the debate. I recognized Mr Wildman, who is not here, and the member from St Catharines was next on the debate line.

Mr Silipo: Mr Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt on a point of order.

Mr Kormos: I'd like to resume my point of privilege.

Mr Silipo: Mr Speaker, I did not hear you recognize any member in the debate. If a member has not been recognized, the member for Welland-Thorold was on his feet on a point of privilege.

The Speaker: Order. The order had been called—

Interjections.

The Speaker: If you would listen just for a minute, the order has been called. I asked then for debate. Mr Wildman had the floor and he was not here, so the next member to speak was a member from the government.

Mr Silipo: Mr Speaker, on that point: I do not quibble with you on the sequence of speakers; it would go from this party to the government side. My point is, you had not recognized anyone; you had not recognized the member standing. At that point the member for Welland-Thorold was on his feet speaking to you, sir, on a point of privilege.

How could you be recognizing anyone when the member for Welland-Thorold was standing, speaking to you on a point of privilege, sir? Mr Speaker, I ask for your reply, please, on that. The member for Welland-Thorold was on his feet. He was speaking to you, and you can't all of a sudden say that you had recognized someone whom you did not recognize.

The Speaker: I had asked the member for Welland-Thorold to take his seat previously when we had called the order. I asked him to take his seat and I said that when the debate last adjourned, Mr Wildman had the floor.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You can check Hansard. I anticipate that you will find that I said Mr Wildman had the floor in the last of the debate. When he is not here, it goes in rotation and the next government member.

Mr Marchese: On that point, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: No. I've ruled. It's over. The member from Brock has the floor.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): When we talk about the Ontario education system, every single member in this House has one goal and one goal alone. Whether you're a member of the government or the opposition, you have one goal and one goal alone, and that is to provide the best possible programs and services to all the children in the province. The members of this House, and indeed all the parents and taxpayers in Ontario, expect nothing less.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Would the members take their seats, please. The orders of the day were called and I indicated that Mr Wildman had the floor when the last of the debate was on. Mr Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, was on a point of personal privilege and I acknowledged his point of privilege, and the member from St Catharines got up and started to speak—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: I have a point of order, Mr Speaker, when you're ready.

The Speaker: Okay. The debate is on, but the member has a point of order.

The member for Oriole.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I rise on a legitimate point of order. I just heard you say that you recognized the member from St Catharines. The member for St Catharines is my colleague Mr Bradley. Mr Bradley was not recognized in this debate, and I just wanted to bring that to your attention to make sure that you hadn't inadvertently called—

The Speaker: I would hope that would correct the record. If it won't, I will. It was St Catharines-Brock I was referring to.

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was listening very attentively, for a very good reason. I was prepared today to speak on Bill 34. You never went, in fact, to the member from St Catharines, because had you done so, I was ready to, on my feet, request, as I'm going to now, that we have unanimous consent to split the time, because Mr Wildman from Algoma—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, hear me out. Mr Kormos, my colleague, was on the floor when you said to him that he could speak. You never went to the member from St Catharines because—because you didn't. And why didn't you? Because you were dealing with that member over there. I was prepared, had that discussion finished, to do what I'm about to do now, and that is to ask for unanimous consent for this House to allow me to split the time with the member for Algoma because he could not be here to speak on Bill 34.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to split the time? We don't have unanimous consent.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The standing orders are quite clear, if the members would listen. If a member stands in the House and says, "I, as a member of this House, stand on a point of privilege," the standing orders are quite clear, and I read, "(a) Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom." And (b) says—pay attention, Mr Speaker—"Whenever a matter of privilege arises, it shall be taken into consideration immediately."

He was up on a point of privilege. You had to recognize him. The member from the government side tried to get up in order to move orders of the day. He cannot get the floor in orders of the day because this very member was up on a point of personal privilege. The standing orders are clear, Mr Speaker. We have not entered into the debate on this bill because this member was trying to get to a point of privilege and you tried—

The Speaker: Order. I'd like to inform the member that we did enter into the debate and—

Mr Marchese: We did not, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, we did.

It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1759.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Allan K. McLean

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

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Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
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Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Chris (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)
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Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oriole	Caplan, Elinor (L)
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Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Hon / L'hon Allan K. (PC) Speaker / Président
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
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Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Samia	Boushy, Dave (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-Riverside	Cooke, David S. (ND)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
		York Mills	Tumbull, David (PC)
		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 15 April 1996

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 15 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 avril 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orion): Last Thursday the government announced, in the Interim Report on Business Planning and Cost Savings Measures, that the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues will be disbanded and replaced by a supposed minister-led consultation process. For those who are unaware, the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues was established in 1984 by a Conservative government to advise the government on matters pertaining to the achievement of economic, social and legal equality for women.

Obviously, the Harris government is not interested in women or in what the women of Ontario have to say. The minister responsible for women's issues will lead a Tory-style, so-called consultation process. I remind you that this is the same minister who has tried to bully women's groups into silence.

This government has one mission: to provide a \$5-billion tax cut to the wealthiest Ontarians at the expense and the silence of the most vulnerable. This cynical move is one more nail in the coffin as the voices of the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues is silenced. So much for the rights and freedoms enjoyed by women in Ontario.

Once again the cutthroat policies of this cruel government are harming Ontario's most vulnerable. This government has gutted protective services in second-stage housing, has cut funding for pay equity advocacy and legal services, has cut funds to prevent violence against women; now the government is gutting and cutting the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and the women of Ontario will not stand for this.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): The doublespeak of which this government is capable continues to reach breathtaking new heights. A government plan to further gut funding for women's programs is preceded by a particularly galling bit of fluff that states: "The Ontario women's directorate helps the government achieve its commitment to economic, legal and social equality for women...and ensure safe communities for all." What twaddle. What is this so-called commitment?

The Advisory Council on Women's Issues is to be disbanded and led by a so-called minister-led consultation process. Translation: Whatever Dianne Cunningham says, goes.

The Ontario women's directorate will be restructured. Translation: Funding will be slashed.

New and innovative ways will be found to prevent violence. Translation: Your funding is gone. Do it yourself. Victims' rights indeed.

Streamlining the administration of violence against women prevention programs. Translation: Public awareness campaign designed to save women's lives gone.

Funding for women's centres to be slashed; centres will have a year to find alternative funding sources. Translation: Remember the time you used to spend directly assisting women in need? Now you're going to be spending it fund-raising.

An underlying message runs through the language in the announced cuts: Women's programming is, according to this government, a fluffy frill that we really don't need. Shame.

HAMLET/PORTIA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I rise in the House today to offer my congratulations, encouragement and support to a fine group of young people in my riding who are making Ontario shine. I'm referring to Lois Burdett and her grade 2 and 3 students from Hamlet public school.

These fine young people have been working diligently to perfect their interpretation of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Initially presented as a part of the program for the annual convention of the Shakespeare Theatre Association of America, which was hosted by the Stratford Festival this year, this troupe of young actors will be presenting six more performances this spring.

In addition to the many fine performances these young people are putting on here in Ontario, the show's run will be capped with a trip to Utah this summer to help celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Utah Shakespearean Festival and the 100th anniversary of that state.

The Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation was in Stratford on Saturday to attend a performance of the play and was duly impressed. In her speech following the play she admitted being moved to tears, and I believe there was no better way to describe the performance.

I encourage the other members of the House to attend one of the performances scheduled for this spring. It's an ideal opportunity to see Shakespeare's work being brought to life through the hard work and dedication of the young people of Perth.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): It took a while to read through the Tory doublespeak contained in Thursday's announcement, but I think we can now say that the following is true with respect to the business plans of the Minister of Natural Resources:

First of all, we can conclude that while the Tories talked about giving sole responsibility for forestry to one ministry—the Ministry of Natural Resources—prior to this election, Thursday's announcement suggests that meant responsibility for forestry would be given from the Ministry of Natural Resources to the private sector.

When the Tories say that the government is streamlining forest management, what they really mean is that they are privatizing forest management. When they refer to exploring a number of opportunities for the operation of provincial parks, that means they are either closing or contracting out as many as 60 provincial parks.

Following on this path leads one to conclude that eliminating "the majority of regulatory permits for activities on crown lands" means the Tories are making it easier for people to start fires in provincial forests.

Thursday's announcement confirms that doublespeak comes all too naturally to the minister sharing double responsibility for the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. It also speaks to the hypocrisy of this government. My advice to the minister is to stop sending mixed messages to the public on an issue as important as the management of our natural resources.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got an important observation to make. Back in the course of the election campaign, the Tories promised that funding for law enforcement and justice was going to be guaranteed, yet another promise broken at the expense of victims across this province—the complete abandonment of funding for anti-drunk driving promotions that have been successful to a large degree in saving people from the carnage that's imposed and inflicted by drunk drivers on the highways and roadways of Ontario. The Tories simply don't care, and we're going to see an increase in the deaths flowing from drunk driving.

Victims of crime: guaranteeing funding for law enforcement and justice—what a load of hooey. We're looking at a reduction of \$4.5 million this year and twice that the year after in terms of reduced funding for law enforcement and for the criminal justice system. That means more and more cases are simply going to be pleaded away or withdrawn, abandoned. That means crime is going to be rewarded by a government that doesn't care about victims and doesn't care about families in those communities plagued by increasing crime. Better management, my foot—\$3.5 million and then \$5 million in consecutive years being withdrawn, which paid for the very important and relevant services of court reporters which helped make our criminal justice system run. This government's going to create more acquittals, more withdrawals of charges and more successful—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Time has expired.

1340

OUR HOME PROJECT

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I rise today to bring to the attention of members of this House the

wonderful work being done by a group in my riding known as Our Home project for Community Living of Durham region.

Our Home provides housing and residential services to individuals with complex care requirements as a result of development and/or multiple disabilities. Their families are supported in an environment that respects their dignity and provides opportunities for participation and growth. Services provided are lifelong, community-based and in proximity to family and friends.

This type of accommodation and support is flexible and tailored to each recipient's needs, ensuring that they remain an integral part of their own families.

Care at Our Home is considered on a case-by-case basis as space becomes available and is provided by fully trained, 24-hour awake staff and family involvement.

Funding for Our Home is from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, but other funding is secured through parental contributions, donations, membership fees and community fund-raising.

I know other members of this House will join me in commending Our Home for the very valuable work they undertake.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Consumers across Ontario are justifiably annoyed at the substantial increase in gasoline prices that represent a gouging of vulnerable motorists by oil companies.

In months gone by in southern Ontario, the price would fluctuate and bottom out at approximately 48 cents per litre. The low end of the scale appears to be in the neighbourhood of 56 to 57 cents per litre in this, the month of April, and as usual, prices seem suspiciously similar if not exactly the same at various gasoline outlets.

Purchasers of gasoline could be forgiven for their suspicion that there is price-fixing in the retailing of this industrial product which is essential to so many, and all the explanations and excuses by the oil industry spokespersons are failing to allay the concerns and anger of consumers in our province.

If the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Environment and Energy care about consumers in Ontario, they will let the oil companies know that it is unacceptable to dramatically increase the price of gasoline without justification, and to cease the price-fixing that plagues the retail gasoline industry in this province.

The private member's bill of Mr Bob Chiarelli, MPP for Ottawa West, is most timely now at this time of price-gouging and should be implemented by the government without further delay.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today, Mr Speaker, to share with you and with the House and, most importantly, with the government what I'm hearing in my constituency.

People are increasingly more concerned and afraid. They want to plan for their future, they want to partici-

pate in the economy and access services, but they are anxious. They don't know what is going to happen next and, even more disconcerting, they don't think this government cares or wants to hear from them.

I met with several groups of people on Friday and over the weekend. At a health forum, I heard terribly troubling stories of people not being able to access in a timely and effective manner the care they needed.

In Sault Ste Marie, our hospital boards, administration and staff have rationalized and downsized until there is no place left to go to cut costs and not affect patient care. The new cuts for this year of over \$3 million and the anticipated reductions for the following two years haven't even kicked in yet and already people are experiencing a very serious and real reduction in care.

I met with educators demanding that you travel the province with Bill 34. Like Bill 26, it will have a major impact on the quality of education and the life of our community. They, and others, want to be heard. They want to tell you that cutting \$4 billion will affect significantly classroom education.

For them, and others, I ask, do you really know what you're doing? Do you understand the impact? What do we have to do to get through to you? Stop the damage and say no to the tax cut.

BETWEEN FRIENDS

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to bring to the attention of this House the 20th anniversary of an international music and cultural exchange that I had the great pleasure of participating in this past weekend in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

Between Friends is a band exchange between Scarborough Centre's Bliss Carman Senior Public School and Beach Grove Middle School from Beach Grove, Indiana, in the United States. Each year, one school band travels to the other school, and over the past 20 years, not only have the band members gained from many educational experiences, but also the schools and communities have benefited from the exchange. The exchange has created lasting friendships between the two schools and the two communities.

I'd like to take this opportunity to offer my personal congratulations to the overall dedication and spirit of the teachers, staff and communities at both schools who spent countless hours, days, weeks and months preparing for the exchange. These individuals are examples to the rest of us.

In the fall throne speech, Premier Harris placed great value on strengthening the role of volunteers in the community and bringing forth the best in neighbours among people of goodwill. This band exchange is all about cooperation, volunteerism and the giving of time, and it is the policy of this government to make these same values part of our province.

I ask every member of this House to join me today in congratulating the two schools on the 20th anniversary of their Between Friends band exchange and in recognizing the outstanding work of everyone connected with it.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'd like to draw to the attention of the House that we had a choir from Portugal here today on the staircase, and we have many of them in the west gallery now. We welcome them.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: This is the first day of the sitting since the announcement by the Chair of Management Board on Thursday of the layoff of 10,600 staff. The Premier is not here, and it's difficult when the ministers involved, who have been impacted by the decisions of the government, are not here to answer questions about the effects of these announcements on their ministries. I don't understand how we, as members of the opposition, or all members of the Legislature, are to be able to properly ask questions in question period if the government is not represented here adequately to answer questions on specifics with regard to each ministry.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member does not have a point of privilege. There is no bearing, on what I have here, to this assembly, to make sure that ministers are here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

USER FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the acting Premier and Minister of Finance, who I believe is just about to resume his seat. Since I have a very short and very direct question, I'll give him that moment.

Prior to the election, Mike Harris said, and I quote, "A fee hike is the same as a tax hike." Minister, why did you introduce millions of dollars in new taxes last week?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): There are several increases in particular fees, as the opposition leader is well aware. We believe that people should be paying the cost of the service that they are provided. They should be paying for a particular service.

There are some things that are, of course, an obligation, I think, for government to provide, such as health care and education, in society. There are other things that perhaps it's more appropriate that individuals who use such services pay for such services.

1350

Mrs McLeod: I think we have to remember that these new fees introduced last Thursday, fees that members of the government, including the Premier, used to call taxes, are on top of \$250 million in new user fees that this government is now making seniors pay for their medication. These new fees are on top of the hundreds of millions of dollars in new municipal user fees that Ontarians are forced to pay thanks to Bill 26 and your cuts. And they are on top of the countless property tax increases that we are seeing right across this province.

After the millions of dollars in new user fees, tens of hundreds of millions of dollars in increased tuition fees, countless increases in property taxes, I suggest to this

government that its income tax cut will be nothing but a shell game for the richest in our society.

Minister, given the fact that you used to say that user fees were taxes, given the fact that you always said that taxpayers were already paying too much, how can you, I ask you again, possibly justify imposing these new user fees?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, I would say to the leader of the official opposition that there is no need for municipalities to increase property taxes. The whole point of this exercise—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: I know that members opposite find this difficult to comprehend, but the whole point of this exercise is to restructure and rethink what services governments at all three levels provide to their constituents. There should not be hundreds of millions of dollars, as the Leader of the Opposition says, in increases in user fees by municipalities. If there are, then those municipal leaders quite frankly are not doing their job and they are not thinking through restructuring.

I might ask the leader of the official opposition to put the increase in fees that we have into proper context, and the proper context is that over a space of two years, yes, there could be up to a \$12-million increase province-wide in particular fees for particular services that people use. That's \$12 million, I might point out to her, of a budget of \$57 billion. Would the Leader of the Opposition care to calculate for me what percentage of the total budget that is?

Mrs McLeod: The minister likes to take a context which is really quite isolated and talk about the new user fees—in other words, taxes—that were introduced last Thursday. They come on top of the new user fees, otherwise known as taxes, that were introduced in Bill 26, both in the form of user fees for health for seniors and the disabled and in the form of user fees that municipalities were given permission to put in place to make up for the cuts this government was giving to municipalities. It should be in the context, when I raise this question, of a government that used to say a user fee was a tax.

Not only is this government cancelling vital services; they are now going to make us pay every time we use one of the services that are left. If those aren't new taxes, I don't know what to call them, Minister.

Last week's announcement will affect everyone in this province. There is no one who will be spared from these new user fees. Minister, your plan to pass the buck on to taxpayers in new user fees is so transparent that the licence plates in Mike Harris's Ontario should now read, "User Fees: Yours to Discover." Isn't this the reality in Mike Harris's new Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Put the signs down, please. Finance minister.

Hon Mr Eves: Was there a question in there? I don't think I heard one. To the honourable member opposite, I hope she and her colleagues didn't stay up all weekend producing those.

The leader of the official opposition makes comment about asking seniors to contribute \$2 per prescription. I just might want to give her a little anecdote. The week-

end after the announcement was made by myself on November 29, I happened to be in a pharmacy in Parry Sound and I was standing in line to get a prescription, unbeknownst to the person two people ahead of me. It was a rather elderly gentleman who asked his pharmacist if he could pay his \$2 towards his prescription. The pharmacist said, "No, that doesn't come into effect until April 1 of next year." He said, "You know, that's too bad, because I think seniors such as myself should be contributing something towards the deficit."

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: I know you find that hard to believe, but there are actually Ontarians out there who want to be part of the solution.

I will also tell the leader of the official opposition something else. The one thing that the leader of the official opposition, and certainly the third party, never point out with respect to our health care announcements is that as a result of our health care announcement on November 29, 140,000 low-income, hardworking, tax-paying, honest Ontarians will now have a drug plan through the Trillium plan: no thanks to you and no thanks to you, but they will thanks to us.

Mrs McLeod: I was in a mall in my riding on the weekend talking to a low-income senior who said she could not manage the extra cost for her medications if she has to pay the dispensing fee. You will hear from a lot more of those seniors than the one you—

The Speaker: Order.

OPP VEHICLES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Chair of Management Board. My second question concerns the radio and television ads that the government ran over the weekend to pat itself on the back for last Thursday's announcement.

Minister, here is the example that you chose to highlight, that you consider to be such a waste of money that you spent \$350,000 to tell the entire province about how you were going to cut unnecessary waste and expenditures so you could redirect that money to priority areas. Of course you'll be aware, because you ran this advertisement right across the province, that the ad states: "...sending OPP cars to Thunder Bay for basic repairs are the kinds of inefficiencies that we can stop so we can direct your tax dollars into priority areas."

Minister, I assume that you and your staff, in preparing your announcement, checked closely on all your information before it was published, so I will ask you, how much did the Solicitor General's office tell you it was going to save by no longer sending OPP cars to Thunder Bay for basic repairs?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As the ad indicates, there are many cars within the OPP which have been directed to the Thunder Bay office for basic repairs in the past. Obviously, not all OPP cars from across the province of Ontario are directed to Thunder Bay, but there is quite a broad area where the cars, if they need maintenance, have been directed to Thunder Bay, many of them, of course, over a space of some considerable distance. I would suggest to

you that every one of us in this Legislature would consider this to be a waste of taxpayers' dollars, to take an OPP car from some considerable distance, to send it to Thunder Bay to have it repaired and then send it back again. That doesn't make much sense.

This government has instituted a new program involving the private sector, so in a locale formerly serviced by the Thunder Bay repair, the local office will now be able to send it to a private sector service station and have it repaired at considerably less cost. And yes, there will be a saving to the taxpayer. We think that's good business.

Mrs McLeod: Not only was the minister's \$350,000 advertising campaign based on wrong information; his answer today is still based on wrong information. The fact is that the OPP has never sent cars to Thunder Bay for basic repairs. In fact, only cars that are used by OPP officers in Thunder Bay are serviced there. So cutting this program, the program you chose to highlight in your advertising campaign, will not save a single cent because it was never a program that was in place. You can't redirect a single penny of this to new priorities because you haven't saved a single cent.

When you looked for the worst examples of waste you could find, the best example you could put forward in your advertising campaign of your mammoth, innovative, cost-cutting restructuring program, your example was simply wrong. Minister, it points out the fact that your so-called business plans are not ready to go. You are scrambling to find the dollars to pay for your tax cut. You were in such a hurry to make your grand announcement that you didn't even bother to get the basic facts right. How many more mistakes are we going to find in last Thursday's announcement?

1400

Hon David Johnson: In fact, there will be about \$225,000 saved in this fiscal year as a result of this action. Next year, in 1997-98, there will be some \$300,000 saved as a result of this particular action. The Leader of the Opposition may not consider that to be a useful method and a useful way to save taxpayers' dollars, but I would think that most taxpayers would concur with this government that we need to look at all opportunities to save money, and indeed that's what we're asking. We're asking, through this ad, this ad that's going out to the people of Ontario, for people to get involved, to bring forward suggestions to this government, to come forward with their ways of how we can do better with less, because clearly, as the result of the spending of the Liberal government, as the result of the deficits of the NDP government, we have to do better for less or else we will continue to run huge deficits and run up the debt of the province of Ontario, and that is not acceptable to the people of Ontario any more.

Mrs McLeod: I hope the public has ideas that make more sense than the ideas that this government has been putting forward, and I hope that when the Minister of Finance finally brings forward a budget his numbers add up a little better than the Management Board chairman's numbers have just added up.

Minister, you will close the Thunder Bay office that did the repairs. No other cars but Thunder Bay cars were repaired there, so they won't be repaired there. But you

forget to add in the fact that they are going to have to contract out those repairs and pay for those repairs. So your savings will not give you many dollars for redirecting to new priorities.

The Minister of Transportation also appears to have given the Management Board chairman the wrong information to justify budget cuts, in this case the budget cuts to GO Transit, because the minister has claimed that Go Transit is operating 2,000-seat cars to service just 20 passengers. I think all of us agree that that would be a horrendous waste of money, except for the fact that it just isn't true. Go Transit operates no trains that are that large, and it doesn't operate any routes that carry just 20 passengers.

When the minister's media assistant was asked to explain where the minister came up with this information, she said, "Who knows?" I think when this government says it wants to run government like a business, if any business did this kind of shoddy work, they would be laughed right off Bay Street.

Minister, it is abundantly clear that your government has not done its homework. You don't know what you're cutting, and you don't know what you're going to replace it with. You won't give us the business plans until after the budget because the business plans aren't there in any way that could stand up to any kind of scrutiny. Will you at least release publicly what you have up till now so that we can all see where the rest of the mistakes are?

Hon David Johnson: The Leader of the Opposition is concerned about the advertising campaign, and I might say that we're being very cautious and prudent about this particular campaign. There is a cost of some \$350,000 to encourage the people of Ontario to participate. I would say, by contrast, in 1990 the Liberals spent over \$1 million on an advertising campaign for OHIP.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. I can't hear the answer. Order.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Tell us about the train.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton East is out of order.

Hon David Johnson: This is a campaign to involve the people of Ontario with ideas. The Thunder Bay garage repairs up to 100 new police vehicles for service annually. We have to look everywhere. We have to look within the GO Transit system. We have to look within the Ontario Provincial Police. We have to look everywhere for cost reductions. We are asking the people of Ontario to help us make government affordable, help us to come forward with better services for less. That's not a difficult concept.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question to the Chair of Management Board. Last Thursday, we received the so-called business plans outlining how the Harris government is going to cut 10,600 jobs and \$1.6 billion. At that time, the Chair of Management Board said that the business plans were a work in progress and he said that he couldn't give us any details because—and I

quote his statement—"There'll be more decisions to be made and there'll be more positions...announced." He then went on to say, "The business plans are an ongoing proposition and they're being developed."

I would have found that odd enough in and of itself, given the nature of the decisions, but then the same minister on the same day went on to contradict himself when he said, "The various ministries, the ministers themselves, the deputy ministers and the staff in each one of the ministries have sat down, studied, analysed thoroughly the impact of these changes on their ministries."

I want to assume that latter statement more correctly represents what the minister and the ministers have done and so I want to ask the Chair of Management Board a very simple question on the basis of that analysis he says was done. He's announced the 10,600 reduction in the public service. What I'd like to know is, what is the impact of the cuts, given the analysis that they've done, in the broader public service in terms of jobs that will be lost and, more importantly, in terms of the range of services that will be lost? Can you tell us what your analysis tells us about those two things?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I wish to assure the member opposite that yes, the various ministries and deputy ministers and ministers have taken this review very seriously. There's been a great deal of time and effort put into it, but it is not complete. I will reiterate again here today that many of the proposals brought forward are still being reviewed and will be reviewed. It's a two-year window we're looking at and there will be decisions that will be made over the next year, and perhaps two, that will be a continuation of the process we're involved with.

What I have come forward with clearly, and I have indicated this right from the beginning, is a summary of the decisions to date of that process. I said last fall in this House that we'd be reporting back this spring with regard to progress. That's what I did last Thursday, and that progress up to this point indicates 10,600 positions, some of which are vacant, some of which undoubtedly will be pursued through early retirement, some of which will be involved in terms of shifting business opportunities to the private sector etc.

I'm not too sure what else I can tell the member but that we have an approach, a thorough review, and we're partway through it.

Mr Silipo: The minister could have answered my question; that's what he could have done. I didn't ask him about the process. I asked him what the impact is of the decisions that he himself says they've made already. If they've done such thorough analysis, why couldn't the minister give us the impact of those changes?

But let me go on, because unlike the government, we have been talking to people about the impacts of these cuts. What they have been telling us are things like this: In Kitchener-Waterloo last Friday we heard, for example, from the social planning council an estimate that some 5,000 to 7,000 jobs will be lost as a result of the actions of your government, decisions that the Chair of Management Board either has no analysis of or won't tell us. At that same meeting, we heard from one individual who works with people with disabilities, and she said, reflect-

ing the views of many in that community, speaking about your government: "They have lied over and over again. They have cut services to the disabled and people are not able to be as independent as they once were. It's not just the cuts, it's the anticipation. Nobody knows what's going to happen." That's a direct quote, Minister.

Again I want to ask the minister: Which is it? Do you know the impact of the decisions, and if so, will you tell us what analysis you've done, Minister, or is it that you simply don't know or don't care what the impact is and you're just going to continue cutting and slashing?

1410

Hon David Johnson: The answer is the same answer that was delivered last Thursday, which is that after the budget is delivered by the Minister of Finance, there will be a release of the business plans and the member will see the analysis and the review.

What I will tell the member opposite is the result if this government did not go through the process that we're going through and if this government carried on with the status quo, status quo as defined by the NDP government over the past five years and the spending patterns of the Liberals over the previous five years, the result would be growing deficits, spiralling debt, interest payments going through the roof, no money left for the services, the health, the education, the social services needed by the people of Ontario, all that money being consumed in interest payments, and the impact on the province of Ontario would be dramatic and drastic and extremely unfortunate. Indeed, there would be a growing lack of confidence in the province of Ontario. There would be increasing unemployment. There would be a continuing lack of hope and opportunity for the people of Ontario.

What we're coming forward with is a program to tackle unemployment, to tackle the growing deficit and to tackle the increase in the interest payments. In the final analysis, as a result, there'll be more hope, opportunity and job growth in the province of Ontario.

Mr Silipo: The minister will continue no doubt in his rhetoric, the government will continue in its rhetoric, but the reality out there, Minister, is a far different one, and you can refuse to see it for as long as you wish, but people out there are hurting and they're going to hurt even more before you're done with them.

But one of the things I want to ask you in my last supplementary, Minister, is about where your priorities are, because one of the things that's already been raised here today is the fact that you saw fit to spend some \$350,000 to advertise to the public what you were doing. I want to be very clear, Minister, in asking you this question, that you hear this part of it as well, which is that I am not criticizing your government for spending money on advertising and telling people what you're doing. That's your right to do that. What I am going to question, however, is how you justify doing that when at the same time you see fit to cut from the same advertising budget the sum of \$475,000 in initiatives to stop violence against women.

How do you square, Minister, your government's priorities, that says that it's okay to spend \$350,000 parading your broken promises and spinning out that story, while at the same time you can justify slashing

\$475,000 out of the same advertising budget that would have gone towards preventing violence against women?

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite says that people are hurting, and I agree. There's no question that people are hurting in Ontario and they have been hurting for many years now, and for this government to turn its back on that situation would reflect very badly on this government. The whole program that we are bringing forward is to address the fact that people are hurting in Ontario today and we need to do something about it. We need to put in place policies to encourage employment. We need to remove the barriers to economic growth. That's what we are doing. We need to restore confidence in the fiscal management of the province of Ontario. That's what we're doing. If we can accomplish that, and I believe we can, then our program will result in more jobs and more opportunities.

The decision to advertise I think is one that all parties have acknowledged in the past. We need to advertise to let people know what the program is and we need to advertise to encourage people to participate, to write in, get a copy of the summary that we have, to bring forward their ideas. How can we present services in a more efficient manner, the services that people need, and at less cost? That's why we're advertising, and yes, there are reductions across the board, including in violence against women. The minister indicates that she has a program, core funding, that will address the needs in that area, but there have been reductions.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): It's unfortunate that the minister isn't here to tell us how she's going to deal with the problems of battered women when she's cancelling this program.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Since the minister of northern destruction is absent, I will direct a question to the Chair of Management Board.

Last Thursday all of us in the House had the embarrassing experience of seeing the Minister of Natural Resources and of Northern Development and Mines try to explain the massive cuts in the Ministry of Natural Resources. He didn't understand what was happening to his ministry. He didn't realize that 2,100 full-time-equivalent jobs out of a total of 4,600 are being lost in that ministry. He tried to explain that laying off more than 40% of the staff and cutting \$137 million from the MNR budget would still make it possible for him to protect the natural resources in this province.

Can the minister stand in his place and assure this House that the government axe we've seen with regard to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the major downsizing of over 40% of that ministry, will not put our resources at risk and will not at the same time significantly harm the economies of many communities across the northern part of the province?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I can certainly assure the leader of the third party that this is not only the objective, but that the goal of this government is to increase the services and do better. In the particular case of this ministry, there are

a number of different alternatives that the minister is proposing: greater use of the private sector, for example, in the planting of trees and managing of forests, whereas the ministry will be involved in setting the policy in the first instance and policing the policy, I suppose, but calling on the private sector to deliver the services.

In the case of parks management, the minister is proposing to enter into partnerships with municipalities and perhaps with the private sector in terms of the delivery of services in some of the parks.

There will be less cost, there will be fewer staff who will be required to manage the programs, but the programs will be delivered every bit as well, if not better, for less money.

Mr Wildman: The minister doesn't seem to be aware that the announcements made last week will have a devastating impact on small communities across the whole of northern Ontario as well as on the larger northern communities, certainly.

Minister, your government is cutting \$46 million from forest management and protection in this province, and you mouth words that you'll be able to deal with this in terms of agreements with the private sector. If I could quote Robin MacIntyre, a member of the citizens' advisory group in Sault Ste Marie district: "You hear lots of words about sustainability being used, but it really doesn't mean anything. It's just a trade word. The forest industry hasn't proven that they are able to monitor their own sites and take responsibility for selective cutting."

You're turning over the management of resources and protection of forests to large companies as a result of this announcement. The forests of the province belong to all the people, not just to forestry companies, and your government, the Ministry of Natural Resources, has a responsibility for the sustainability of our ecosystem. What actions are you taking to ensure that our forests will be properly managed on behalf of the people of Ontario by this policy of letting the fox into the hen-house in our forest management?

Hon David Johnson: There will be staff reductions. The member opposite has indicated that. In fact, the reductions in southern Ontario actually exceed the reductions in staff in northern Ontario by about 10%, just for the information. But to directly respond to the question, there will be still over 4,600 staff remaining in this ministry. I believe, this government believes, the minister believes that—this is the information that I have from the ministry, over 4,600 staff, and those people will ensure that, in terms of its involvement, will be able to administer the staffs and police the private sector and ensure that our natural resources are protected.

1420

Mr Wildman: Minister, it's completely wrong. The total staff today is 4,600 and he's cutting 2,100 out of it. There won't be 4,600 left. You're cutting 40% out of the 4,600.

I'll give you an example of what this ministry is doing. According to the document that was provided to our critic for the Ministry of Natural Resources, the ministry is closing a total of 17 out of 19 fire bases in northern Ontario. In the eastern region alone, Temagami, Blind River, Bracebridge, Bancroft, Whitney, Moosonee, Kap-

uskasing, Hornepayne, Gogama, Kirkland Lake, Elk Lake, Manitouwadge have all had their fire bases closed as a result of this announcement. Surely the minister is aware of the significant risk to communities as well as our forest resources if we don't have adequate ability to meet a forest fire emergency. Surely he doesn't forget that last year we had to evacuate communities like Dubreuilville because of serious fire risk during the fire season.

Minister, with the closure of 80% of the northern fire bases, as part of a 40% cut in the staffing of the Ministry of Natural Resources, how can you explain that that ministry is going to be able to do better with less? The fact is, we're doing less with less and our resources and northern communities in particular are at risk as a result of your decision. How can you guarantee that there'll be proper firefighting ability for the Ministry of Natural Resources when you're closing 80% of the fire bases?

Hon David Johnson: There will be a consolidation of the offices and this government is clearly attempting to do the same job with less resources—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Cochrane North is out of order.

Hon David Johnson: This government has had to revamp government. We are running deficits, your deficits, of over \$10 billion a year. How long do you think that that can carry on? How long do you think we can carry on with the status quo? Government has not been revisited for over two decades.

I can assure the member opposite and the people of northern Ontario that this government will take whatever measures are necessary to ensure the safety and this government has reviewed the program in place for firefighting, is consolidating and is coming forward with a program that will work. I can assure the member opposite that the note I have is that in fact there will be over 4,600 full-time equivalents in this ministry. I think the people of the province of Ontario would say that's a good number of people to look after the services, to look after the environment, that is necessary in northern Ontario and indeed right across the province.

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Energy and it concerns Hydro policy. Minister, as the person who articulates the provincial government's Hydro policy, I'd like to ask you whether or not you and your government are prepared, as a matter of policy, to sell off the public's hydro-electric assets at Niagara Falls.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the member opposite for the question. What we have been attempting to do since forming the government is to find ways to ensure the competitiveness and the stability of Ontario Hydro. In Ontario we're faced with uncompetitive rates from our public utility.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): You can't be selling Niagara Falls. Say no.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order, the member for Oakwood.

Hon Mrs Elliott: We have established the Macdonald committee, which will be returning to me shortly with some recommendations for the government.

Mr Colle: There is nothing sacred.

The Speaker: The member for Oakwood, come to order.

Hon Mrs Elliott: We will be formulating a government approach on different ways to restructure that utility so it can indeed provide reliable power and competitive rates.

Mr Conway: Let me be clear: As a matter of public policy, are you and your government prepared to sell off the public's assets in terms of hydro-electric resources at Niagara Falls?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Over the years, the taxpayers and the citizens of this province have made an enormous investment in Ontario Hydro. It is a utility that has been admired throughout the world for many things it has done. We require its power; it's very, very important to our economy. We recognize that. We also recognize the fact that it is approaching a state where its rates are uncompetitive. We are looking at the entire system to see how we can restructure it to make it competitive to provide safe, reliable power. As a government, we have not made determinations on how we are going to change this utility.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is regarding this government's latest surprise attack on the health and safety of working people in the province of Ontario and it's directed to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. Your government has not been content with just abolishing the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, slashing mandatory health and safety training, and taking away support and benefits from injured workers. Now we learn that your government and your ministry are intending to change the Coroners Act and remove the mandatory requirement for inquests whenever there are deaths on a construction site or in a mine.

Workers and their leadership in this province are shocked and angry. We know that in Steelworkers Local 6500 in Sudbury Dave Campbell said, "Fatalities in the mining industry used to be through the roof and mandatory inquests help reduce the number of deaths." Roly Gauthier of Mine-Mill CAW Local 598, representing Falconbridge workers, said, "You can't quantify the number of lives and limbs that have been saved by inquests, but we know there are many."

Why didn't you listen to workers and their representatives before you made a decision that could very well make their working lives very, very dangerous? Why didn't you do that?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): We've listened to the advice of the chief coroner's office, and they are not ruling out inquests with respect to deaths in the construction or mining industries. If there's a clear justification for an inquest to be called, it will happen. I think the member is being alarmist with respect to this issue. If you take a

look at virtually every other province in this country—the only one we haven't been able to confirm it with up to this point is Newfoundland, but every other province has moved in this direction. We feel very confident in the abilities and skills and the responsiveness of the chief coroner's office with respect to concerns that are raised surrounding any questionable death in either the construction or mining industries.

Mr Christopherson: Let me just say to you that to the working people of this province, "Inquests if necessary, but not necessarily inquests," is not a good enough policy when we're dealing with life-and-death issues affecting working people. We know the track record of this government in terms of not wanting to talk to anyone outside their friends and the bureaucracy. The fact of the matter is that under Bill 7, where you took away rights that, in part, caused the strike with OPSEU, with the royal commission on WCB and even with the current Jackson report, which intends to gut the WCB, there's no opportunity for public consultation, meaningful input from the people whose very rights you're taking away.

My question to you is very specific and it's very straightforward: Will you commit today to meeting with workers' representatives in a public meeting to allow them to give you their side of this issue before you arbitrarily and unilaterally take away a right they now have that you didn't run on in this province as a mandate? Will you commit today to that kind of meeting in an open, public forum?

Hon Mr Runciman: Before this change does become law it requires an amendment to the Coroners Act, as I would think the member is aware. There will be an opportunity for public input through that process, and in this assembly. I want to assure that member that we in no way will do anything that is going to jeopardize workers' safety in this province.

1430

CHEMICAL SPILL

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. On Monday last, thousands of gallons of chemicals spilled into the Etobicoke river after a holding tank ruptured at an Etobicoke plant manufacturing margarine.

The 4,600 gallons of lye posed a serious environmental hazard to river life. Citizens have been warned to keep away and also to have their pets kept away from this situation. There's also a possibility that the lye could have an adverse impact on the sewer system in that particular area between Belfield Road and Dixon Road.

Minister, how can you assure us that the safety of the citizens of Etobicoke will be protected and wildlife simultaneously protected?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank my colleague the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for the question. He's quite right that there was a serious spill into the river in his riding last week. I would like assure my colleague and the citizens in his riding that the ministry was there shortly after it happened. There was a significant rise in the pH level of the creek, and I would like to assure him that as of today

the pH level is returning to normal. The ministry staff is testing the sediment in the creek at this point in time.

Under the rules of the Environmental Protection Act, the company itself is responsible for the cleanup in an unfortunate occurrence such as we've experienced. I would like to assure the member that the company is taking its responsibility seriously. They have hired a private security company to guard the edges of the river bed to warn people of the dangers at present and to keep them away from any hazardous situations that arise.

Mr Hastings: The supplementary deals with the ministry's role in providing a specific update and a comprehensive report on this incident at the most appropriate time.

Hon Mrs Elliott: We are on the scene. The investigation and enforcement branch has been called in to investigate. It does not appear at this point that there is damage to the infrastructure, but we will continue to investigate and monitor this. We will ensure that the citizens are protected and that the site is returned to normal.

If charges are required, they will be laid, and I would like to assure the member that not only will we be investigating and making sure the cleanup occurs, but we will be working with the company to ensure that such an occurrence does not happen again. I will be most happy to report to my colleague at the conclusion of this investigation.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Labour. The enormity of the damage of the cuts announced last Thursday on northern Ontario is indefensible and unjustifiable and certainly will have to be revisited by all ministries, in particular the minister responsible for the protection and viability of the north, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

The business plan not only impacts upon the lives of northerners, but from now the removal of the provision of mandatory inquests for construction and mining deaths from the Solicitor General's business plan affects the deaths of miners and construction workers and their families.

My question is simple. As the person responsible for miners, miners' safety and safety in the workplace, do you agree with the direction taken by the Solicitor General and did you advise him, or did he seek your advice about this particular aspect of his business plan?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): To the member opposite, I certainly share your concern for the safety of the mining community. I would indicate to you that I have been assured that no changes have yet been made to the Coroners Act, and that when those changes are going to be made, there will be consultation and there will be in no way any compromise of workplace health and safety. As I have pointed out on numerous occasions, our objective is to create the safest workplaces in this world. We intend to do that.

In fact, I want to also indicate to you that the Ministry of Labour will continue to investigate all workplace fatalities. We will continue to make the information available to the coroner, who then will make the determination, and we will continue to enforce the Occupational

Health and Safety Act as a result of the information. I can assure you that people in the mining industry will be provided with greater safety than ever in the past.

Mr Bartolucci: The rhetoric of it is very nice, but in fact the mandatory obligation for an inquest is removed.

There is obviously a correlation between the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and your ministry when it comes to safety in the workplace and in particular safety in the mines. Could you please inform the members of the House, did you meet with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and did you, jointly or independently, make any recommendations to the Solicitor General with regard to this particular aspect? If so, would you please inform the House what those recommendations were?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would indicate to you that we will be meeting with the Solicitor General, and I have been assured that there will be no compromise to workplace health and safety.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Mr Speaker, I did have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues, but I see that once again she isn't here, in fact has not been in the House since the so-called business plan and summary were released.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Not only is the member's comment about somebody else's presence inappropriate; she might want to know that the minister's son today is having very serious surgery and she thought she might want to be there for her son. I know the member for Riverdale wouldn't understand that. You might have the class to stand up and apologize.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: That is exactly why you are not supposed to make the comment, dummy. I withdraw the word "dummy," Mr Speaker. Just "insensitive."

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): There's nothing out of order.

Mr Crozier: The word "insensitive" is not?

The Speaker: No, there's nothing out of order. We're in question period. If you have a point of order you want to raise later, you can—

Interjections.

The Speaker: No, there's nothing out of order. Member for Riverdale.

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, given that information, I withdraw that comment.

There is an issue I would like to address to the Minister of Community and Social Services on a very sensitive point. I would like to ask the minister what his government has against single mothers and their children.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): Nothing. We're trying to assist them.

Ms Churley: I have news for the minister. He might be interested to know that to date, although this govern-

ment likes to talk about helping get people receiving social assistance out of the cycle of dependency—

Hon Mr Eves: Give me a break.

Mr Crozier: I wish I could. You don't deserve it.

Hon Mr Eves: You don't think somebody should be there when their child is having an operation?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

1440

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, I did withdraw the comment, given the information. And I note that there are many ministers missing here today, which can be very frustrating to us, after this document was released.

I am asking a question about the cycle of dependency, which this government has said time and time again it would like to see people receiving social assistance get out of, so let's look at what you've done so far to help single mothers in this province.

You've cut the counselling dollars for second-stage housing that help them find jobs and new housing. You've changed the funding formula for the Jobs Ontario child care spaces. We know municipalities have already eliminated more than 4,700 subsidized spaces and will soon announce a workfare program that does absolutely nothing to help single mothers get back to work, including no new child care spaces.

Now, Minister, you have told those pursuing post-secondary education that they will be cut off welfare and to rely on OSAP, not only saddling them with a huge loan burden but taking away the medical and dental benefits they now get for themselves and their children. Will you explain to the women of Ontario how this policy is supposed to give them a hand up?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Let me be clear that in most cases post-secondary students will be eligible for more assistance for living costs and education costs than they would be under the old system, and this is part of our overall objective to improve the system. We believe in giving people the opportunity to invest in their own education and allowing them to chart their own course for self-independence and self-sufficiency. We're no longer going to force students, as the old system did, into the welfare system in order to get post-secondary education; we encourage them through OSAP, and clearly our whole system is geared to provide student assistance, not welfare assistance.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): My question today is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, a number of people in my riding have expressed a concern over friends and family who have moved to Ontario and are unable to practise their professions because either academic or professional credentials are not accepted here in Ontario. We've heard all kinds of stories about chemists sweeping floors, skilled engineers waiting on tables, and things like that. Minister, are you prepared to take any steps so that these talented newcomers can receive an opportunity to work here in Ontario in their chosen field and thus provide the maximum benefit to this province's economy?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Brampton North for the question. As part of this government's commitment to the equality of opportunity for all people in Ontario, the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and my ministry have been working together to address those issues the member has brought up so well today and has identified so well, the issues particularly of people who are recent to Ontario who have credentials from other parts of the world who want to practise their professions here in Ontario.

We are exploring now the options for servicing those people through a credential assessment service. This was announced earlier this year. We're cooperating with other provinces in Canada that have offered this service and have a model for offering this service. We're looking into that now and we hope to have, and in fact we expect to have this service up and running in 1997, and we have budgeted for the startup funds for this project, so it's well under way.

Mr Spina: Minister, we know that Ontario's immigration pattern is shifting, with a large number of immigrants coming from countries whose education and professional criteria are really quite different from our own. As part of these assessment processes, do you feel you'll be able to get the appropriate information on these international programs to be able to apply them here in Ontario?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, the member for Brampton North points to a very particular part of these assessment and credential problems that we have currently. In fact, Ontario receives over 50% of immigration to Canada currently, and over half of that is from Asia, Africa, Central or South America. From many of those countries of origin the exact nature of the credentials is not well known, particularly not well known to the professional governing bodies here in Ontario. So part of the job of an assessment service will be to keep a database up and to be able to identify what the equivalencies are of those accreditations from around the world.

That's one of the reasons why we think it's important to have this agency, so that those comparisons can be both impartial and consistent and so that those recent immigrants to Ontario who have professional status in their home country can, if that professional status matches with the requirements here in Ontario, perform their profession here in Ontario and save the taxpayers of Ontario obviously the cost of reinvestment in an education that's already happened and allow those people to enjoy the full benefits of life in Ontario.

SPEED LIMITS

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Solicitor General. Mr Minister, as you know, last week the Minister of Transportation announced that he was planning to increase speed limits on Ontario highways in the 400 series from 100 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour. Given the concerns raised over the last two or three days by a number of front-line OPP officers about the negative impact this greater speed will have on people's safety on Ontario highways, I wonder

whether or not the Minister of Transportation consulted with you or the OPP before he made the announcement, and I wonder whether or not you support or agree with this proposal to increase the speed limit to 120 kilometres per hour.

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I don't believe that the Minister of Transportation has made an announcement with respect to increased speed limits. I believe he was indicating that he was prepared to take a look at that question that had been raised with respect to the 400 series of highways. We did indeed have a brief discussion following that comment and I know that, as the member has indicated, there certainly are concerns that members of the OPP would have if indeed that change took place, essentially with respect to having the ability to enforce a zero tolerance policy and the manpower that would involve.

Mr Colle: A lot of people have been saying that it's almost a rare sighting to see an OPP cruiser on our provincial highways because of the cutbacks, so they're just wondering where this government is going to get the resources to implement a zero tolerance policy when right now they can't find the resources to fund highway safety and enforcement. I just wonder again, Mr Minister, whether you, as the minister in charge of the OPP, knowing the constraints you have, will have the ability financially to increase the enforcement, especially when you don't have the option of photo-radar any more so you're left with basically a manpower-personnel option only. Can you support this proposal, given your constraints in your department, because you're going to have to be out there in the front lines ensuring people don't travel 150 or 160? Can you support that, considering your constraints?

Hon Mr Runciman: This is truly speculative because the minister has not made a formal proposal along these lines or had any formal consultation with my ministry, nor I with the OPP or police services across this province.

I do want to indicate that I was informed by the OPP commissioner about two weeks ago that we now have an additional 85 marked police cars on the highways of this province, so that hopefully the visibility question is going to be addressed by those additional marked cars on highways in this province.

Certainly if this is under serious consideration, I know the minister and others concerned with respect to road safety questions will sit down, will discuss it thoroughly along with his officials, my officials, others who will be impacted by road safety questions and certainly the police services across this province.

1450

APOLOGY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Mr Speaker, a point of personal privilege: I would like to apologize to the minister responsible for women's issues for my comments. In the heat of the moment sometimes we say these things. On behalf of me and all my caucus, I sincerely wish the minister and her son all the best.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have today an additional 4,050 names on a petition which now amounts to over 18,000 names from 51 communities across this province that have been gathered by Rose Kulimouski and Mae Mussolum. I want to add these 4,000 to those that have been presented already.

They "call on the Minister of Health to restore the \$1.3 billion that was cut on November 29, 1995," from the health care budget, "and to ensure that the health care budget will stand at \$17.4 billion for every day of the life of this government."

I affix my signature to this petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition that was sent to me by a member of my riding, asking me to present this to the Legislature, indicating that those who have signed this petition conscientiously object to tax breaks the present government is planning to implement.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I agree with the comments of my constituents and I am proud to sign this petition.

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise today to present a petition for the people from Durham East.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to not proceed with the privatization of Ontario Hydro, especially under the nuclear component which represents a potential safety threat to the people of Ontario (in any unregulated environment)."

I sign my name to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): "Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care funding; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign, the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton task force related to any hospital closures in Hamilton-Wentworth, and in particular St Joseph's Hospital, 50 Charlton Avenue East, Hamilton."

I will add my name to this, and this will make over 10,000 signatures that have been presented to this House on this issue.

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the matter of selling Ontario Hydro is likely to come before the Legislature in the near future;

"Whereas we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, who have through the payment of electricity rates paid for Ontario Hydro, are concerned about privatization of Ontario Hydro, leading to higher rates, lower reliability and compromised nuclear safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Please preserve the public ownership of Ontario Hydro and refuse to sell this important public asset."

I affix my signature to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to rise today and present a further 2,000 signatures gathered by Rose Kulimouski and Mae Mussolum, to bring to over 20,000 the signatures to the following petition:

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care funding; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign, the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment; and

"Whereas the Conservative government has already cut \$1.3 billion from the budget of the Ministry of Health when on November 29, 1995, the finance minister announced a series of spending cuts designed to reduce the deficit; and

"Whereas the \$1.3 billion in funding has gone directly to reduce the deficit and therefore cannot be reallocated within the health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to restore the \$1.3 billion that was cut on November 29, 1995, in order to maintain the promise made by this government to protect health care funding and not cut health care; to reaffirm this government's commitment to no new user fees; and to ensure that the health care budget will stand at \$17.4 billion for every day of the life of this government."

I'm proud to affix my signature along with the 20,000 other people in this province who have already done so.

FAMILY SUPPORT PAYMENTS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have another petition. This one is on the family support plan. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we believe that the family support plan is a viable and necessary service provided by the government in Ontario,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the proposed centralization of the family support plan will have a negative impact on the children who are supported under this program."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): There are more than 16,000 signatures I've received against the closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That a recommendation by the psychiatric hospitals restructuring committee to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital be rejected.

"We believe the restructuring committee has not fully considered the case for retaining the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

"We believe the hospital and the community of St Thomas provide care and caring for psychiatric patients which is equal to, and better than, London.

"We believe closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital will have a devastating impact on the economy and the residents of St Thomas and Elgin county.

"We believe London can better absorb the impact of closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital.

"Finally, we believe it would be cheaper for government to retain the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in terms of capital improvements required to both facilities."

"Therefore, we request that the government refrain from endorsing and implementing the recommendation to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital."

I've affixed my signature to this as well.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I have a petition.

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects of Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my signature to this petition.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I am pleased to present petitions and letters from Gwen Lee, Donna Bentley-Ward and Rose MacGowan from my riding on behalf of thousands of constituents. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Realty Corp was directed to develop a plan to sell the more than 84,000 units owned by the Ontario Housing Corp; and

"Whereas the cut, slash and burn policies of the Progressive Conservative Party have forced seniors, families and social assistance recipients to rely, more than ever, on rent-geared-to-income public housing in order to maintain a decent quality of life; and

"Whereas the sale of OHC units would impose undue hardship on hundreds of thousands of people across Ontario; and

"Whereas the administration of rent-geared-to-income OHC properties by our local housing authority of Hamilton-Wentworth is conducted in a more responsible and cost-effective manner than the proposed privatization-shelter allowance concept;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned representatives of the three area tenant advisory committees in Hamilton-Wentworth, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing address the concerns and answer the questions of the 2,750 signators of the accompanying letters and petitions, and we request consultation with OHC tenants beyond Metro Toronto regarding the proposed sale of their homes."

I proudly join with my constituents and add my name to theirs.

1500

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I am presenting a petition my office received from the OSSTF, PR division, with respect to the proposed Ontario College of Teachers. It's not in the right format, but I'd like to present it anyway.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition to the Legislature signed by 330 teachers:

"Whereas the public and secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote,

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

I affix my signature to the petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Chudleigh from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs presented the committee's report on draft legislation on auto insurance and moved its adoption.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It is my pleasure to stand in the Legislature and deliver the standing committee on finance and economic affairs' report on auto insurance.

As the House would know, the committee travelled to Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Ottawa and London, in addition to hearings in Toronto. On this journey, we consulted and canvassed a wide variety of opinion which included all sectors of the auto insurance industry. Those representing insurers and those personally injured had an excellent opportunity to air their thoughts and views on the government's proposed legislation.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all groups and individuals for their input into this decision-making process and assure them that their opinions and views were taken into consideration in drafting this report.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues in all three parties for their time and effort on the report and draft legislation.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Chudleigh moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I was informed earlier today that there would be two guests in the Speaker's gallery: the Honourable Angela Knight, British Economic Secretary to the Treasury, and Mr Peter Davies, British consul general. Those are the two people I was informed would be in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ANGLO CANADA GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY ACT

Mr Bob Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr45, An Act respecting Anglo Canada General Insurance Company.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to deal with the motion for interim supply.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Mr Eves moved the following government notice of motion:

That the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of civil servants and other necessary payments pending voting of supply for the period commencing May 1, 1996, and ending October 31, 1996, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I have no further comments with respect to this matter, Mr Speaker. There will be several speakers from our side of the House, and I would defer to the official opposition.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to indicate at the outset of my remarks that I will be sharing the leadoff time under our orders with my colleague the member for St Catharines. Let it be clearly indicated that Mr Bradley and I will be sharing the 90 minutes.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Can I have unanimous consent to allow that to happen?

Mr Conway: I didn't seek consent to that. Let me seek the consent of—

The Speaker: We have consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Conway: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I want to thank honourable members for that.

I'm happy to see the chancellor of the exchequer here today. He seems to be somewhat calmer after question time. I worry, quite frankly. I've known the chancellor for 16 years now, 15 years, and the chancellor is altogether too exercised and often too angry at question period. I know I'm the one saying that, but you can't and shouldn't be as bad as I am. You're too young to be too angry that continuously at question period. So we've got to see more of the relaxed Ernie in question period.

But it is good to see the chancellor looking in a happy and expansive mood when I think of the social credit economics with which he has to now deal, particularly as between now and budget day three or four weeks hence. One of the things that I can say, as someone's who's known the chancellor for, as I say, a decade and a half is that he is a supremely sensible, practical man. He knows the kind of hocus-pocus economic and fiscal game into which his seatmate has now forced him, and it must cause the chancellor, in a private moment, some considerable anguish.

I know his deputy, who I gather has embraced the new canon with an enthusiasm that has to be seen to be appreciated, so I would say to the chancellor that he might want to convey my very best seasonal wishes to the deputy, who I'm sure is engaged in very important public business elsewhere.

I wonder how many of the deputy's old friends at the University of Western Ontario looked at the sunshine list and said, "Aha, he got us after only nine months."

Speaking about the sunshine bill, wasn't that an interesting list? We've been asked to come here today to vote supply, and that's a very important business for the Legislature to do, for any Parliament to do.

I must say that in the county of Renfrew there was more than passing interest in the century club. I think it is fair to say that the absence of my good friend the mayor of Montague, the member for Lanark-Renfrew—I don't want to speak too completely on the subject, but certainly it was of some interest to find that there were five members of our public board of education who had made the list. It was of some interest as well, I think, to find out that directors of education are paid better than provincial court judges in some cases. It was interesting, as I said earlier, to find out that some school boards seemed to have more people on the list than others.

I just want to make a very candid confession to my friend from Wellington. I took Stevie Paikin out to lunch a couple of weeks ago and I paid. I want that on the record. I took Steve Paikin to lunch and I paid. The member for Halton North and I were Mr Paikin's guests—

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): When's my turn? I want to be next.

Mr Conway: You want to be next? I guess I'm in a better position to do so, having read Mr Walkom's piece in the Saturday Star. And let me in a very generous way congratulate the chancellor and his colleague the member for Nipissing. I've been around here a long time, and I have seen successes and I have seen ultrasuccesses, but the efforts of last Wednesday that the treasury bench effected with respect to pay and pensions in Her Majesty's service will, when I write my book decades hence, go down as the greatest victory on the public relations account that I have seen in 21 years. I want to, in a very generous and ecumenical way, say to the chancellor, you outdid yourself.

1510

Interjection.

Mr Conway: No, I promised my colleagues that on that subject I would keep my silence. Beyond that I will say no more, but I do want to congratulate the chancellor because that was a success one can only marvel at.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Well, the member from High Park, fresh out of Chaucer.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Dewy-eyed.

Mr Conway: Oh yes, the member from High Park, right out of Chaucer. But my Lenten drought is over and my generous mood is here, so I will leave the pardoner in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Last Thursday the government made an announcement that was very significant. It had to do of course with the subject of question period today and last Thursday as well, and that was the subject of the cuts. I was struck today by the exchanges, particularly between the leader of the third party and the Chair of Management Board, about what happened to natural resources. Let there be no confusion: There was a skewering of the old Department of Lands and Forests. I mean, it was eviscerated last week. The argument that the government will advance is consistent with the mantra, "Well, it was all of that spending of the bad old days, particularly the bad old days from 1985 to 1995, that has occasioned all of these cuts." More on that later.

I did go to the library and I pulled out a random sample of budgets from the early 1980s, because while I was generous a moment ago, particularly this—I excuse just about everybody here from this. I excuse the member for Willowdale and all of the new bloods from 1995. But I have to say that it gives chutzpah a new lease on life to see Mike Harris and Ernie Eves in here, as consistently and as aggressively as they are, talking about the deficit spending of the last decade. There is no question there was deficit spending in the last 10 years; that is clearly a matter of public record.

To be fair to the chancellor, he is more cautious than his incautious colleague the first minister. Mike Harris must think we all have the kind of amnesia he seems to suffer from on occasion. Because the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore was here from 1981 to 1985. He will remember; I know he commented. Was there ever a more willing and dutiful acolyte than Mike Harris back in those years? When Frank Miller and Billy Davis said, "Jump," Mike said, "How high and how often?" The Taxfighter, Mr Harris, was here in the 1981-85 period. He was an upwardly mobile Tory. He was chair of a legislative committee that handled a number of the finance bills.

I will digress for a moment. The 1982 budget: Here is a partial list of the tax measures that netted the government an additional \$1 billion, fully annualized, that I can remember Mr Harris ramming through in the committee with great alacrity and greater efficiency.

What did the Harris-Eves canon of that day call for? Tax changes to the Retail Sales Tax Act, as contained in the 1982 budget, by the description of the holy mantra, now "the good old days." Just listen. If you live by the sword, you'll have to at least play by the sword and perhaps even die by the sword.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): You're supposed to die by the sword.

Mr Conway: Well, that's too vulgar and too aggressive. But did you hear the Chair of Management Board today? We got more of the mantra. I just go back and I look at the 1982 budget. Thanks to Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and Frank Miller, we imposed provincial sales tax for the first time on trees and shrubs, on feminine hygiene products—that's the one I remember. They were real taxfighters back then. I remember that was part of what they were prepared to tax. I want to say to the television audience, who might not have been listening 12 and 14 years ago when Mike Harris was cutting his teeth around here, that's part of the record.

Interjection: Was there TV in those days, Sean?

Mr Conway: There was TV, actually. There was some quite good television back then.

But I say to the Tory caucus—the member from Ottawa-Rideau smiles knowingly—taxes for the first time on trees and shrubs, feminine hygiene products, street flushers, storm doors, soaps and tissues, classroom supplies, student supplies, buses and repair parts purchased by municipalities—and the list goes on—a billion-dollar tax increase in the gut of a recession. Who was in the committee doing the tough, dirty work to make sure it happened? Mike Harris and his friend the member for Parry Sound.

Interjection: Morley?

Mr Conway: Morley? I want to be fair to Morley, because Morley, then and now, had a kind of healthy eclecticism. He knew he was going to have a harder time than perhaps some of these more supplicant acolytes like Mr Harris. Oh boy, because Mike would do the bidding. If Frank and Billy wanted it done, Mike particularly was there: "You want a tax increase, you want a tax bill run through the committee? I'll run it through." A billion dollars' worth in that year, and more the year after.

Deficits? Oh, I don't want to upset the equilibrium of the treasury bench, but deficits—\$1 billion, \$2 billion, \$3 billion, just in that 1981-83 period. I see the member for Durham East looking incredulous, but it is true. There's something even more true. This is being perhaps more archival than people should be allowed to be, but my favourite is the 1975 budget, because you see, if the early 1980s were the good times, according to the current mantra, surely the mid-1970s were cornucopia itself.

What have we got? I like this because this was the first budget that I saw when I came here. Darcy McKeough—was there ever a more credible pillar of the Tory right-wing establishment in the history of old Upper Canada? Hardly; I couldn't imagine one. Now I want you all to hold your stomachs over there because this budget 21 years ago, in the halcyon days of Tory prosperity, called for a \$1.8-billion deficit on a spending plan of slightly less than \$13 billion. The author of this document was, as I said, W. Darcy McKeough, duke of Kent, pillar of right-wing fiscal conservatism.

I know the member for Lambton and the member from south Hastings and the member from north Hastings are going to say: "But that was then; this is now. We are a new breed." Let me say, you are, and that has to be admitted; I'll talk a little more about that later on. But I just say for my efficacy, if for no one else's, I would like Ernie Eves and Mike Harris to at least stop shoving such nauseous craperoo in my face as that which they shove on an hourly basis to the effect that there were no deficits prior to 1985. I want to say that again for the record, because one of these days I'm going to get a little angry and I'm going to get up and be even more specific in some of these remembrances. I guarantee that if the chancellor and his friend the first minister think this attracts their attention, and it probably doesn't, there is more in the annals of their past around here that will certainly, on the fiscal front, attract the attention of the House.

1520

I remember Mike Harris back then, and he had a great line. I'm sure he won't mind my quoting it. I used to say, "You know, Mike, you're the member for North Bay." My goodness, can you think of another provincial town where there is more provincial government activity, direct and indirect? Harris had a great line. He said, "I want my share of the waste." That was Mikey. He appears to have done rather well.

I say to my friend the member for Lambton, now to get a lecture from the first minister would be like my getting up and making a speech about the benefits and first-order importance of short speeches. I wouldn't expect the member for Wellington or anyone who's been around here for a while to take that with much comfort.

Last week's announcement on the government's spending reductions has a very considerable impact in my part of eastern Ontario. Let me say, unlike others perhaps in the opposition, that I understand entirely the situation in which the government finds itself. I was perhaps a bit jocular in talking to the finance minister when he was here a while ago, but he is facing an almost impossible situation. Anyone who knows anything knows that to take a deficit line that's at or about \$8 billion, to cut taxes by \$5 billion on a fully matured tax cut implementation, to maintain core programs and to balance the budget in five, six or seven years are absolute impossibilities. You can't do it. I give people some credit for saying they're going to, I suppose, but you just can't do it without so crippling the core programs that you say you want to protect as to make your undertaking almost ridiculous.

That's what I find interesting about this fiscal plan when I look at it, understanding as I do something about what I thought Conservatism was all about, and in some ways I am quite conservative on some of these matters myself. My constituents indicated to me both during the recent election campaign and since that while they all like a tax cut, they want core programs maintained and they want the fiscal house of the province brought into a greater order; there's no doubt about that. The notion that we are going to cut taxes by \$5 billion at a time when the deficit is \$7 billion or \$8 billion or \$9 billion is to most people I know a dangerous business. Over the next year or 18 months we will see just how the chancellor and his colleagues work out the arithmetic.

I see the minister of justice looking very studious as he reads what looks like Time magazine. You know, he's looking rather relieved. The national newspaper reported on the weekend that they were breathing very deep sighs of relief over at the justice department because, thank God, they had been spared the worst of it. They may have been spared the worst of it in this round, but if this fiscal plan is to be effected, let me tell my friend the justice minister that there are going to have to be deep cuts into the muscle of every program if that commitment is going to be kept.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Wrong.

Mr Conway: The minister opines, "Wrong." I don't say I'm surprised he would say that, but we will see what we will see.

Speaking for my constituents in rural eastern Ontario, they know they are getting hammered. Someone said to me the other day: "You know, the Ontario government is going to start looking a lot like your neighbourhood bank. There are going to be fewer of them around, fewer people in the banks that are around and a heck of a lot more service charges than you ever dreamt possible." There's no doubt about that. I mean, I was left speechless that the party of family values was going to nearly double marriage licence fees. Incroyable.

Mr Guzzo: How much is a divorce?

Mr Conway: The member for Ottawa-Rideau makes a very good rejoinder: "And how much is a divorce?"

I'm not here to beat up on lawyers, and I wouldn't expect retired judges would want to do that either. But

rural Ontario, which I represent, certainly is going to have a much less present provincial government.

You may have noticed that within the last couple of days I've been trying to engage my friend the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in a little debate, because there is no doubt that despite his solemn promises of the last campaign, he's going to be breaking those promises just every day between now and the end of his mandate.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): He won't. He won't.

Mr Conway: The member for Lambton shakes his head and says: "He won't. He won't." Well, let me just say that a whole series of Ag office are going to close, that colleges at Ridgeway and Kemptonville are going to be gutted, a whole series of field services.

Mr Beaubien: No.

Mr Conway: My friend from Lambton shakes his head and says, "No." I guess all of the farmers I've talked to in the last 10 days and all of the public servants I've talked to at the Ministry of Agriculture have got it all wrong. But the member from Hastings, fine fellow that he is, will appreciate—in fact, I read in the *Tweed News* the other day that he, unlike some of his colleagues, was on the street during the recent labour difficulty, and according to the *Tweed News*, a very reputable newspaper, Mr Danford was saying that, yes, he understands the pressures and some of the problems. He was being told by his constituents that in fact offices in Hastings were either going to be downsized or transferred out to Kingston or Belleville or wherever.

That's certainly the reality in my community. We're probably going to lose our Ag office, and the farmers of Renfrew will have to go to Ottawa. Isn't that a wonderful situation? I can tell you, the people of the upper Ottawa Valley will really appreciate going to Ottawa and/or Toronto to get the kind of field services they have been accustomed to receiving at a more local level.

The Ministry of Environment, very important in our part of Ontario as a superintendent of important public interest in the public domain, particularly as it relates to waters, lakes and streams, has been very substantially reduced in terms of its mandate and its responsibility.

Mr Wildman this afternoon rightly pointed out that almost 40%, probably more than 40%, of the staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources are going to be terminated. Let there be no confusion about this: The crown lands of this province, in terms of their superintendents, are essentially being turned over to private forest operators. There is no question about that.

Now, some people who know me and my relatives will say: "Aha. You should be happy about that because you're in that business." It is true I come from a lumbering family. I have no direct interest, you understand. But there can be no confusion that the crown lands of the province are being turned over by and large to private interests. In fact, I would go one step further and say that the effect of the government policy is going to be to turn over the crown lands to major corporate interests in the resource sector.

We will see what we will see. I can recall a time when the presence of the government was less in areas like

forestry, for example, and we had some very interesting results. We had some very interesting activities that in many cases Her Majesty's local government had to come and fix up and pay for.

One of the questions I have, particularly from many of my friends in the business community, who are not disappointed about what is starting to look like a great barbecue—there is going to be opportunity here the likes of which some people have not seen in over 50 years. There is a very strong move afoot to eliminate the government presence and monopoly in areas like liquor and electricity. I was saying not too many days ago that we could be back in those good old days of the pre-war years when liquor and Hydro gave this province the best scandals it has ever known.

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Don't forget the pipelines.

Mr Conway: No, no. Pipelines were a national concern. I'm talking about provincial affairs. When we look over the last century at some of the really interesting political difficulties this province has had, let me tell you, Hydro, crown lands and liquor have produced some of the very best.

1530

Now, I know it's 1996 and we have a much more public-spirited public and private sector than might have been the case in earlier times.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): That's right.

Mr Conway: I want to thank the member for Etobicoke West for his observations in that respect.

On behalf of my constituents in rural Ontario, let me say that we note the loss of the provincial government presence in areas like natural resources, like environment, like highways. The poor minister of highways is not with us this afternoon, and it's not all his fault, but I'll tell you, I live on the highways of the province, and I have never in my adult life seen the King's highways in such bad shape as they have been in the last two or three months. In fairness, it is partly the weather. We've had a peculiar winter.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Not at all.

Mr Conway: Spring has finally arrived. Someone in the back corner, Hastings by name if the seating plan is to be credited, has awakened in a way that tells me spring has arrived. But it is the first rule of rural Ontario that you do not tease just-awakened bears in springtime, so I will give Mr Hastings a wide berth.

But we observe, in eastern Ontario at least, really deplorable highway conditions: Highway 41, up the spine of the Frontenac axis; Highway 401, particularly in the Napanee area—Highway 17, between where I live in Pembroke, up through Deep River, to Rolphton and Mattawa, is absolutely deplorable.

Hon Mr Harnick: Who has been looking after them for the last 10 years?

Mr Conway: I only know, I say to the justice minister, what I experience on a daily basis.

Hon Mr Harnick: Let's be fair.

Mr Conway: I'm trying to be evenhanded and fair. I drove the King's highways in the period 1967 to 1985, which was 18 years of Conservative administration, and they were very good highways. They were—what were

the old slogans? every election brought a new slogan—"Highways for Progress," "Roads for Development" etc.

But the other day, driving the 401 in the Napanee area of eastern Ontario, I thought I was someplace just north of Gary, Indiana, on the interstate, making the turn into Chicago: pothole central. To call them potholes is to understate it. There are places in eastern Ontario where the roads are breaking up.

Hon Mr Harnick: Ten years of neglect.

Mr Conway: Absolute poppycock, I say to the justice minister. I have too much respect for my friends on the government side to imagine that in this kind of debate they want to engage in that kind of adolescent politics.

A baby cried.

Mr Conway: I say to the member for Wellington that he's added a particularly insightful voice to this debate.

Rural Ontario is getting the short end of the stick from a government that promised it the long end of prosperity. Hydro rates: The Minister of Energy was up here a few months ago saying, "We've frozen rates for five years." And you know what? She has. But in the delicious irony of our time, she has frozen rates and substantially increased costs for thousands, tens of thousands, of rural and seasonal hydro users. I am sure my friends from Hastings and Lambton and Oxford are getting the calls I'm getting, because my phone has been ringing off the wall for the last few weeks.

Mr Beaubien: I don't have a phone.

Mr Conway: You don't have a phone, the member for Lambton? Well, that I can understand.

Let me be clear that the Minister of Energy's statement of a few months ago that hydro rates were in fact being frozen is only part of the story, because there are, and the member for Quinte will know this, thousands of people who this month and last month are starting to get bills, and I'm getting calls from farmers who are apoplectic. They want to know how with a rate freeze they are now getting increases of 200% and 300% with no more use of energy; in some cases less.

I only raise it today because the people who are getting tagged with this injustice are, I repeat, in the main people in rural Ontario and seasonal property owners.

Mr Stockwell: Flat fees.

Mr Conway: Well, flat fees. If the cost structure has been changed to double and triple the price, the farmers are noticing that and they are not happy campers at all.

As one of the members from rural Ontario, I simply want to say to the House today that when farmers I represent see their electricity costs going up dramatically at a time when the rates are supposed to be frozen, when they see their provincial highways literally crumbling at the gate, when they see their field services in agriculture being shut down and withdrawn to an urban place, when the farmers are told their children are not really going to be able to go to Kemptville and Ridgetown but they better pack their bags for Guelph and they may not even get into Guelph, when their bus routes are starting to disappear—we don't yet have the evidence before us, but let there be no confusion. I represent places, and so does my friend from Rawdon, in all the milk run through east-central Ontario. You get on the bus in Pembroke and you go across to Eganville, to Golden Lake, to Killaloe, to

Barry's Bay, to Maynooth, to Bancroft, to Apsley. Do you think that route is going to be there when deregulation is with us? Let me tell you, it is not going to be there, I'm sorry to say.

I guess the question that the members from places like Hastings and Renfrew and Glengarry and Wellington are going to want to come to the House and ask is this: Why would we be voting supply to OC Transpo? Why would we be voting appropriations—why would we be paying taxes to a federal Parliament that can't wait to build airports and that subsidizes air tickets?—to the provincial government that transfers substantial moneys to the TTC and to a lot of local urban transit authorities, when the only transit, the only public transport we've got is the Voyageur bus that snakes its happy way through the hardwood hills of Renfrew into the pine valleys of Hastings? It's gone. That's going to be the reality of deregulation. Yes, the bus from Ottawa to North Bay will still run, the bus from Cornwall to Toronto will still run, the bus from Toronto to Peterborough, and from Toronto to Barrie, will still run, but if you're in Maynooth or in Killaloe you're out of luck.

It will be a good question for the minister of transport, federally and provincially, "What have you done to assist reasonably my citizens' interest, as a senior citizen or as someone who does not have his own car or half-ton truck, what have you, government, done to facilitate my transportation needs in rural Ontario?"

I just say to my friends in the government caucus, as one member from rural Ontario I'm hearing from farmers and rural residents that they're concerned about deregulation in the motorcoach industry; they're really angry about the impact of this new cost structure at Ontario Hydro that is driving up by two and three times their cost for electricity on the farm and at the cottage; they are extremely concerned about the loss of a whole range of field services in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs that have been withdrawn or are in the process of being withdrawn; they are really concerned about what is going to be happening on the crown lands. In my county, almost 50% of the land base is crown land—50%, nearly, of Renfrew county is crown land—and we are essentially dismantling the Ministry of Natural Resources and hoping and praying the private interests are going to maintain the public interest in our crown lands and in our crown forests.

1540

I mention today that inquiring minds in my part of the province want to know, is Mike Harris really prepared to sell our nearly century-old public assets, our public hydro-electric assets, at Niagara Falls? Is he really prepared to do that?

Interjection.

Mr Conway: The member from the Kingsway says, "Not likely," and my constituents in the main are going to be happy to know that, if that is government policy.

I might ask the always-knowledgeable, ever-vigilant member for Etobicoke West, the Kingsway, if he'd like to offer a response on this question. He might want to comment on whether the government, the politicians over there, unlike the president of Hydro, is able to offer the consumers of electricity in the province any greater com-

fort about what residential and farm customers are going to see should a significant privatization occur. Mr Kupcis, at the Macdonald commission, said he had no idea as to the impact on rates of a significant privatization.

What I have to say to the member from the Kingsway is that most people he represents and I represent will expect, will assume, that there will be and there ought to be no privatization of any significant kind if it cannot be demonstrated that there are going to be price benefits to residential and farm consumers, since we all assume in the nature of things that industrial and commercial consumers will be well provided for.

The member confesses—and I appreciate this—that he, like the president of Hydro, does not know. I can accept that. But I just assume we are not going to betray the legacy of Adam Beck for some kind of ideological nostrum that is not at the same time going to be able to produce a price advantage for residential and farm electrical consumers.

I noticed in the Economist today that the British government, the Conservative government of John Major, is going to allow the merger very soon of two giant private generators with two very significant regional electricity distributors. What we will have in Britain, which is always held out as the example of what it is we want to emulate, is a situation where we're going to have increasingly a private monopoly at the expense of the electrical consumer, especially the residential and farm consumer. The city of London is very happy; they can scarcely contain their enthusiasm. And I don't doubt that when Bay Street reads the public ruminations of the energy czar, the Minister of Environment and Energy herself, the first minister, Bay Street must be salivating.

But, you know, Main Street has an interest here as well. Adam Beck understood that 85 years ago. I'm one of those who does not believe that in Adam Beck we had any perfect saint; I never met a London Tory then or now who had that quality of saintliness about them. But I say to my friends in the government that surely before a public policy is decided in favour of any significant privatization, you are going to be able to tell the residential and farm consumers of electricity that they are going to have a benefit in terms of not just reliability and safety, which they've come to accept as part of their patrimony, but also that their rates are going to be favourably affected.

I'm happy to see the member for Mississauga West here. He has been busy, engaged in a reform of automobile insurance. I want to just take a moment this afternoon to offer some personal and constituent views on that subject. Governments of all stripes in recent years have tangled with this cobra, and governments of all stripes and taxpayers of now over a generation have been stung by this cobra.

Mr Stockwell: Remember "I have a plan"?

Mr Conway: Absolutely, and I am suitably chastised with that cut to the quick.

But the government has a plan, or it is trying to strike a plan. I just simply want to say to the House that a number of my constituents—and on this, let me confess a conflict of interest—myself included, are increasingly

concerned by what we are seeing at this point from the industry.

In Ottawa, we have an English-language daily called the Citizen, which has a very capable reporter and columnist, Dave Brown. He's been reporting over the last six months on just simply readers, consumers of insurance, who are writing to tell him, Dave Brown, about their horror stories under Bill 164.

It's a credit to the minister of justice. He sits there sagelike, saying nothing, breathing slightly more heavily than otherwise, because upon his arrival here six years ago, I mean, did we have—

Mr Stockwell: You can't see what he is doing.

Mr Conway: Now, Christopher, that is rude.

When Mr Harnick arrived here six years ago, he arrived as the unvarnished ambassador for the old order, the trial lawyers and the old insurance order, and did they have a dutiful acolyte. He was very effective. He lacerated poor Peter Kormos and he laughed at, with considerable effect, those old Liberals who had made such a tangled mess of it all.

I just want to say to the government and especially to the very able parliamentary assistant—able, I am told, by the most interesting of my friends and relatives—that there is still a lot of unresolved business.

Hon Mr Harnick: Blame me for Kormos.

Mr Conway: I am not blaming you for Kormos. I would blame very, very few people for Kormos. I think, actually, it is Frances Lankin who is going to have to figure out Mr Kormos in the short term and not any of us, but that convention is still two months off.

I simply want to say that some of what is being reported in the insurance sector at the present time is very upsetting, and some of it appears to be perfectly scandalous: people with minor incidents being thrown into Facility, people who are paying now \$3,000 and \$4,000 for minor incidents that weren't even their fault. I tell the House, I say to the government, that consumers are not going to stand for it. Yes, there will be an acceptance that there must be—and it's still secret. I have had my problems with the Highway Traffic Act's speeding provisions, and if I'm a speeder and if I'm getting into accidents, clearly that should be reflected in the risk assessment attached to my premium. But there are simply too many people out there now, people I represent, who are starting to get premium notices that are driving them through the roof, and they're not going to tolerate it. This is a system that is not working. It is going to have to be fixed in some way that hopefully the government proposes, that the opposition amends and that consumers are going to accept.

I say to my friends in the New Democracy that as a result of Bill 164 I think we have opened the door to a new level of fraud that, if my experience is any indication, is positively outrageous. If I end up in Facility for some kind of a ding that was not my fault and that was purely fraudulent, I am not going to be a very happy consumer. I'm not going to embarrass any of my colleagues who have been reporting some of their situations, and I'm sure they're telling me the whole story and the whole truth, but I simply say that Dave Brown in the Ottawa Citizen for six months has been documenting

chapter and verse of stories in the Ottawa area where consumers whose behaviour seems to be reasonable have been really penalized by the new calculations, it seems, of the insurance industry.

1550

As I wind up, because my colleague the member for St Catharines has joined us, I want just a couple of more minutes to do a couple of snappers, as they say on the old game shows.

I may be the only one, but I have to just say it for the record: How many here remember my old friend Jane Fulton? I want to say for the record that it was interesting to read that Globe and Mail report of a couple of months ago that Jane Fulton, like Mike Harris, appears to have oversold herself. I just hope Mr Harris is following poor Jane Fulton's difficulties out there in Klein land, in Alberta. I thought it interesting because for years we used to see Jane around here, and she is now the Deputy Minister of Health. By gosh, she had a great résumé. It was the most spectacular galaxy of achievement we had ever seen. That nasty old Globe and Mail just went and checked the file and it turns out that, a bit like the Mike Harris plan, there's substantially less than met the eye.

I noticed in the office today that the Niagara Falls casino site has been selected, and my friend from St Catharines will be talking about this. I just want to say, and I don't mean to be preachy or judgemental on this, but I went for the first time in my life, a month ago, to a casino.

Mr Pouliot: How'd you do?

Mr Conway: I lost 50 cents.

Mr Pouliot: You made a contribution.

Mr Conway: I spent 50 cents.

Interjections.

Mr Conway: My friend from Hastings says, "I hope it was in Quebec." It actually wasn't. It was in Connecticut. It was at the Foxwoods Casino, which sits south of Hartford, between New York City—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It was 63 cents, Sean.

Mr Conway: Very good. I thank the member for Halton North. I just simply want to say, the day I was there, there were something like 15,000 or 20,000 people there. It's owned by a native band. I think the band is 350. I think their net revenues last year were something in excess of half a billion dollars. I just want to say on my own behalf, having spent 90 minutes in the place, I never felt more demoralized and more saddened in all my life. Quite frankly—

Interjections.

Mr Conway: I don't know if anybody remembers Bob Welch. I remember talking to Bob Welch years ago about the casino and gambling business we were getting into. I'm sure the member for High Park has perhaps even preached on this. On that afternoon, I must say, I've never seen so many impassive, joyless people in my life, and if that is the economic future of this civilization, then I've got to tell you, we are in for a very interesting time.

Mr Pouliot: People ain't going to Las Vegas, Sean.

Mr Conway: Listen, I know people go. I'm a good little Catholic boy. I used to work church bingos.

Interjections.

Mr Conway: That's right, I was a little Catholic boy; never very good. But seriously, I just looked at that spectacle and I thought to myself—do you remember the old movie *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* on those dance marathons of the 1930s? That's the kind of sense I had of the place. Listen, many in my own caucus—I'm speaking only for myself. It was something I'd never done before. I'm not going to rush back. It was certainly an experience I will remember for a long time.

I've tried to touch on some of the issues that are of concern to my constituents. I want to repeat as a representative from rural Ontario that the Harris government's approach to policies, whether in agriculture, transportation, environment, natural resources, is beginning to give some very real pause and concern to people who do understand that we have to make change, that we clearly have to bring the financial house in order, but it is a matter of doing it fairly. I have not spent a great deal of my time talking about the tax cut, but a number of my constituents think it is absolutely immoral to be talking about a multibillion-dollar tax cut at a time when we are wrestling with a multibillion-dollar deficit and debt-servicing costs that are of an order of magnitude that the Treasurer and the Chair of Management Board have often observed.

One of the reasons I'm a Liberal is that I think those values of balance and moderation and fairness are important. I noticed a few weeks ago that even the Premier himself expressed publicly a concern that his policies were dividing the province, and there is no question that they are dividing the province. There are divisions now that are troubling to many people and even in the government caucus itself. There is an anger abroad in the land that is being fed by a certain kind of politics that I think is very, very dangerous.

As I said earlier, there's no question there were excesses that had to be corrected, but it's awfully difficult for my typical constituent who is a farmer, a small business person or a logger to pick up the *Ottawa Citizen* or the *Financial Post* and read that the overwhelming majority of this tax cut is going to go to the overwhelmingly well-to-do in this society at the very time that that family member or that family as a group is going to be faced with an array of fee increases, and I'm now talking about the real fee increases like college and university fees, a series of municipal levies that are going to be substantial and noticeable.

My constituents are quite prepared to play their part and do their share, but this policy of redressing some of the excesses of the recent past in terms of spending against revenue is only going to be successful if we convince the broad base of the public that what we are about is both necessary and fair and that we can show people that from the Premier on down, and that includes bank presidents—you know, it's interesting. On that, I'll allow myself one final digression.

There's a lot of talk in here about people who have ripped off the system. Did you see the paper? I was going to bring in the two pieces from last week. Did you see that story about what's been going on at the executive suite of the Independent Order of Foresters, where hundreds of thousands of dollars of shareholders' and

policyholders' money were being spent in some very creative and inappropriate ways? There was a front-page story in the *Toronto Star* the other day about what the Toronto-Dominion Bank knew about Mr Stavro's purchase of Maple Leaf Gardens, apparently, and what charities didn't know. Has any member of this Legislature come in here to talk about some of those behaviours?

I don't mean this to be partisan, but people watch, and if we are beating up on old people and recipients of social assistance, if that is our everyday activity and we have nothing at all to say publicly about some of what's going on upstairs, then I think we are going to be in some difficulty with the broad base of Ontario citizens.

I'm not one to play the Pat Buchanan game of bashing Bay Street and bashing Wall Street, but when Bay Street executives talk about what government needs to do about getting its house in order, I hope Bay Street understands that when stories of the kind I mentioned—and I just mentioned two. I didn't mention, for example, 60 Minutes of Easter Sunday evening, where CBS ran the story that chief executive officers in private companies in the United States today are now earning 203 times the average industrial wage. They were earning 145 times the average industrial wage earner's salary, I should say, just three years ago.

People wonder why Patrick Buchanan has some appeal to an electorate in the United States. Quite frankly, Buchanan scares me; he terrifies me.

1600

Mr Kells: He should.

Mr Conway: I agree, he should. But the fact of the matter is, there were a surprising number of Americans who found his message somewhat attractive. In part, the attractiveness and the appeal of his message is that he struck into that undercurrent of resentment that there seems now to be two sets of rules: one for regular folks and another for the very well-to-do. I'm sure my friend Mr Bradley, who was raising some of these concerns with the Premier the other day, will want to pursue some of these issues.

But we have some difficult decisions, we have some tough times ahead of us. If we're going to manage to make the public policy I think our constituents want to see us bring about, one of the very real tests we're going to have to meet and that policy is going to have to meet is the test of fairness. It's going to have to be fair to both rich and poor, and fair to people working inside the public sector and people working in the private sector, and certainly, I say on behalf of most of my constituents, fair for people living in rural and urban Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am going to address some of the issues I believe are compelling to the people of this province in April 1996, particularly in light of the announced drastic cuts by the provincial government in the expenditures which are designed to provide services to people in Ontario. First of all, I want to deal with the general thrust of this government and make some observations about what I consider to be that general thrust. It is clear that we are seeing now what I would refer to as the Americanization of the province of Ontario. The reason I say that is we see the government now emulating many of the jurisdictions in the United

States, particularly those with the Republican Party in power. I look at Governor Pataki in New York, for instance; New Jersey; some in terms of Michigan; a number of other states in the United States. The emphasis has been on New Jersey and there have been some interesting articles in the newspaper on the situation in New Jersey.

What essentially we're going to see happening in this province is a widening of the gap between those who have and those who have not. If the Conservative Party wishes to be the party of the rich and the privileged—which I didn't consider it to be in its previous incarnation as government. Although I always felt it was the party of the Family Compact in years gone by, I always thought there was a very good streak of benevolence in that government and a sensitivity to the disadvantaged in our society. That is not a trait which I notice in this particular government, with a few exceptions of members who have privately, or at least not in this House, expressed those views.

I don't think this is good for Canada. I think what we have admired about this country as Canadians and been justifiably proud about, and what many Americans and others have admired, has been the sensitivity to the needs of others; not those who will not help themselves and are capable of doing so, not those who would abuse the system, but people who are genuinely disadvantaged because of illness, whether it be mental illness or physical illness, or those who simply have not had the opportunities others have had in our society.

It is my belief that all members of this House, for instance, would be concerned about any abuse of the system, those who, to use the jargon of the 1990s, are ripping off the system, and would want to see that kind of fraud ended. The Provincial Auditor spotted what he considered to be, and his staff working with him considered to be, the number one fraud going on in Ontario, and that is tax evasion of various kinds. He noted that while the provincial government was busy chasing people on welfare for those funds—and those who were not appropriately dealing with the system of course should be called to task, but he noted that when the government was spending its time on that exercise, there was a lot of money being lost, most money being lost, as a result of people dodging taxes, people who were making money and not living up to the responsibility according to the legislation and regulations existing in this province.

What I have observed about this government, and I think others are observing today, outside of the zealots who are supporting the government—I understand there's a certain segment of society who believe everything this government is doing is fine, and in fact probably in some cases they don't believe you're moving far enough. But the general consensus I would see from people in the moderate middle, small-c conservative people who have a sensitivity to the needs of others, generally the moderates of Ontario, is that they observe that while they see you, the government, moving in a direction that is probably a direction in which many governments have to move—that is, of endeavouring to bring about a more cost-effective and efficient operation of government, something that's shared I think by the three parties in this

province. In the latter years of the NDP, certainly they made this effort at great sacrifice to their traditional supporters, who were very much annoyed that they would act as a conservative government in many ways, a small-c conservative government.

I think there's a consensus. I'm not a person who lives and dies by polls, but the CBC carried out a poll which I thought was rather interesting in that it demonstrated that people generally, with some exceptions, liked the direction in which the government was moving, but when asked which party they would support—and this is particularly meaningless until election time—said they supported the Liberal Party over the Conservative Party by a minor amount. The fact it would be that close within that poll is rather interesting, because what it tells me is that while people may believe, and I think many in this province may believe fairly, that the government has moved in a certain direction, in many cases the government is moving, first of all, far too quickly and, second, far too drastically.

I know from a political point of view it makes good politics to get the cuts over with quickly, to do the so-called unpopular things quickly, but I think if a government is going to be competent and fair-minded, it has to slow down, it has to take its time and evaluate the impact of the cuts.

We saw an interesting exercise last Thursday. The government was eager to get its program of cuts out, but if you listened to the questions that took place and the explanations, both to the news media in the hallway and to those of us in the opposition, you found that many of the ministers, even those who have a reputation for being quite competent, were a bit flummoxed by all the facts and figures, and a bit evasive—not necessarily in a sinister way, but because they simply didn't have the answers.

That is a sign of a government moving quickly to show everybody, particularly those who strongly supported it, that it is moving in this direction and is prepared to take the tough action. Yet I think the government makes a mistake when it does move far too quickly and far too drastically.

Time after time, people who call me, talk to me or write letters to me, very often those people, who are not necessarily supporters of the government or wouldn't have been seen to be supporters of the general thrust of this government in years gone by, are saying, "We understand there have to be some cuts, but we wish the government wouldn't move as rapidly and as drastically as it is." That's one caution I would put to the government.

I must, while I think of it, tell you how annoyed I was to see the government advertising on the weekend. For years, I've been annoyed. I don't care which government it is. When I was Minister of the Environment, if I noted any self-serving advertising, I would immediately cut that. I never allowed polls when I was a minister. You never know what happens when people are there all of the time, but I did not like polling and did not want our ministry polling, because I think that's a misuse of the taxpayers' funding in the Ministry of the Environment. I really resented the self-serving ads the government presented.

If the government puts out an advertisement that says, "We're going to be doing an immunization program in Ontario and here are the reasons why," that's legitimate. That's information. That's valuable information to people in this province. But the ads we saw on the weekend or that we heard on the hockey or baseball games were clearly self-serving Tory propaganda. If the government wants to say that in this House or in the hallway, I have no objection to that. That is the government line. That is the message the government wishes to put out. What I resent is the use of taxpayers' money, particularly when Mike Harris—if I may use the name referred to him—the Premier of our province, in opposition, denounced that tactic on the part of the New Democratic Party. He was vociferous in that denunciation, yet his government is doing exactly the same thing when the government said it would be different, and in the context of very deep cuts.

1610

I feel compelled to chastise the government for that and for the polling they're doing, again at taxpayers' expense. If the Progressive Conservative Party wants to pay for those ads or pay for those polls, that's quite legitimate. I don't mind that, that's a function of the political process, but I resent direct taxpayers' money being used for those purposes.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): You did it all the time.

Mr Bradley: I want to look at the tax cut. The member for Grey-Owen Sound has now come into the House, and I'm glad he did, because he is one of the individuals, I know, who is very concerned about the tax cut. He is a person who has what you call street sense, political sense, and he knows what people are thinking. I may not always agree with him, but when I look in the government benches and say, "Who has a good political nose over there?"—and I don't mean that, again, in a sinister or cynical sense—I would say the member for Grey-Owen Sound has a good political nose. The member for Wellington, my friend Ted Arnott, wrote a letter to the Premier calling the tax cut reckless. The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the member for Etobicoke West, again, all people who have their ear to the ground in terms of politics, have expressed concern about the tax cut. It's been suggested that as many as 25% of the government caucus believe that the tax cut, as promised, should not be proceeded with.

I want to tell you something: Often, members of the opposition are critical of a government when it doesn't proceed with a promise. I would stand in this House and praise the government if it were to abandon that particular initiative, because I think if the government looks at the circumstances today—it's now in power; it sees what the circumstances are—and says, "Look, we think the tax cut should wait until we balance the budget, when we have the money to do it," I would commend the government for that. I'm fair-minded enough to do that. I'm not confident the government will do that, but I would be one who would be complimenting them on that.

I think, again, you would see that there'd be some public opinion on that side; not the people who are the zealots—they're going to call for it no matter what; they

want it and that's that, but when you have to borrow over \$20 billion to give me and others a tax break, I don't think that makes sense. I heard from many people, as the government did—and it's trying to address it—that the deficit is the problem in this province. If indeed the deficit is the problem, then why would you go out and borrow over \$20 billion and add well over \$20 billion to the accumulated provincial debt, if that is the problem? I think you'd be justified in abandoning that particular initiative.

There's a second reason I think you should. The real story behind the depth of the cuts, the total gutting of many ministries and many services by this government, rests with the tax cut itself. It's in order that the government can try to meet the tax cut. In other words, they know they're going to have to borrow the money, but they don't want the deficit to go too high so they're cutting.

I've talked to economists about this—not all of us who sit in this House are expert—and they talked about the combination of a tax cut of this kind and significant and substantial cuts in government spending. They say it would have a contractionary effect on the province, not a stimulative effect. Again, these are people from the breadth of the spectrum, the width of the spectrum out there, who are saying this.

What the government in effect is doing now is putting up some taxes. If they were not to give this tax cut, that would be better than the user fees we're seeing in the province. The government announced on Thursday—they hid it well in the back pages, but they announced many, many, additional user fees. Mike Harris, when he was leader of the opposition, said, "A user fee is a tax." I agreed with him at the time, and by gosh I agree with him today, that it's a tax. So this government has many more of those. That's why those of us in the opposition were holding up signs—I won't hold this too long—like this in the House. I know in the House we shouldn't have too many props so I won't hold it up forever. It says "User Fee," with the Premier on this.

What are we seeing in terms of the ministries? Agriculture and food: \$56-million cut. All of those rural members who were assured that this government was going to provide the appropriate agricultural services for people in the rural part of Ontario, they must be embarrassed today to see these kinds of cuts. I can't believe that they would want to see these kinds of cuts. I can tell you after the next election there won't be as many, regardless of how the electorate votes, because the government is also cutting the number of rural seats in Ontario so that rural representation and northern representation will be reduced even more. I'm not presumptuous enough or arrogant enough to say, "Somebody else is going to defeat you next time." That's up to the electorate. But what the Premier has done, again worshipping at the altar of these right-wing zealots who want to see government cut no matter what the consequences—in that context, what we are seeing is a significant reduction in the number of rural seats in Ontario. So the voice of rural Ontario is diminishing with this government. I'm sure my friends who were elected on the government side—from the back benches, many of them, some in the front

benches—must be concerned about this slap in the face to rural Ontario.

The Ministry of the Attorney General being cut 606 positions, \$60 million—and I heard how important the administration of justice was; how we had to have prosecutors, or crown attorneys, as we call them; how the court system had to deal with these people much more quickly so we didn't have acquittals for the trial not coming to court as soon as possible.

I look at the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, and see \$42 million disappearing.

Community and social services: \$308 million. That's got to affect people who are developmentally disabled who are not going to have the same level of service as they had before. That's got to affect people—it does so. The minister shakes his head. I can say it does so. You tell the people who are kicked out of the sheltered workshop on Bunting Road in St Catharines and you tell their parents and friends that had no effect. They've had to rationalize their services, as you would say, and they are being cut. I know a woman and I went to her door in the election time. She has cancer. She was getting a service three days a week. I'm going into the field of health as well. She has now those home services cut back to two days a week. She said she would crawl around on her hands and knees if she had to, so don't look at me over there with the big money you make and the background you come from and talk about those people who are being disadvantaged. Don't tell me that. That's exactly what's happening in this province. People who are disadvantaged are being shoved aside by you people. Don't tell me that's not the case, because you can bring them one after another. I'll bring the woman to this Legislature. I'll bring her to the gallery. I don't like doing that, but you should know, Minister, that is happening in this province. If you don't know it, you should know it. Somebody's not telling you what's going on.

I look at the field of consumer and commercial relations. Supposedly we are supposed to protect the consumer in this province, yet in consumer and commercial relations \$25 million is being removed.

I look at economic development and trade, which is supposed to promote trade, which is supposed to promote business in this province, and it's being cut by \$160 million.

Education and training, which is always an investment in the future, is being cut by some \$337 million.

1620

Environment and energy: The environment ministry, which is already a small ministry, is being gutted. The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and I are two former ministers of the environment. He would know, as I know, that in order to carry out its responsibilities as it should, it has to have the adequate staff and adequate resources. I heard a question from the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale today about a situation that existed—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Why don't you go and save the Whitby hospital? You save the Whitby hospital if you're going to start yapping over there, because that's exactly what's going to happen: The Whitby hospital is going to disappear if you don't watch out. You keep your eye on that.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): Your government didn't give the grant to the Whitby hospital.

Mr Bradley: Ah, now it's somebody else's fault. We heard all of your promises during the campaign about the Whitby hospital. You make sure you keep that Whitby hospital.

All over this province we're going to see hospitals closing. Already we're losing people in the front line. Ask people who've had to go into the hospital lately what it's like to go into the hospital today. You'd better have relatives or friends to help look after you because there isn't the staff available that there used to be. Those services aren't there. In St Catharines there was a lot of bragging about the dialysis services. Well, I would like to ask you to look at the number of patients being funded corresponding to the number of patients who are actually in that unit, and I can tell you that while you can talk about that unit being expanded—and it was under the previous government, and we're delighted with that—the funding is not there. We probably have close to 130 patients on dialysis and there's funding for less than 100, and we hear bragging from the Minister of Health about what's happening in the field of health.

I look at the finance department, the health department, intergovernmental affairs, labour, which is supposed to be looking after health and safety, which is supposed to be looking after complaints both by employers and employees that exist in our communities. They're already backlogged, and they're turfing those people out the door. Municipal affairs and housing, natural resources—my friends in the rural areas of the province tell me that ministry has been hurt so badly by these drastic cuts that I'm sure members of the government must be embarrassed. I encourage them to go to the caucus meeting tomorrow morning to express that view to them.

The Solicitor General's department: I heard about this, and I know my good friend the member for Leeds-Grenville is a person who in the past in opposition was very committed to police services in this province, and we see his ministry being chopped by some \$60 million. I know he must be deeply disappointed, because I remember the questions he directed quite legitimately to the last two governments when he was in opposition. He was a vociferous advocate for adequate law enforcement in this province, and yet he's seeing \$60 million taken out of his budget.

There is \$124 million going out of the budget of the Ministry of Transportation, while our roads are crumbling, while there are potholes in the potholes in the roads of this province. The people who are looking for oxygen in their homes at the present time, people who are disabled and looking for that kind of assistance, cannot get it to the degree that they used to in the past.

What you have done, if you want to look at political cleverness, in many cases is put the cat among the pigeons. There used to be a game when you were a kid called pin the tail on the donkey, and that's what people should be doing in this province.

You've got the fight going on in education. With the drastic cuts that are taking place you've now got elementary people fighting with secondary people; you've got the Catholic system fighting with the public system;

you've got the people who promote junior kindergarten fighting with people in adult education; you've got community colleges fighting with universities, and they're pointing fingers at one another. The people who advise the Premier rub their hands in glee because this is great stuff; the blame is going to somebody else. But the real blame has to be placed on this obsession with delivering a tax cut in this province which is bringing about these drastic kinds of cuts.

We have shortages of doctors in certain areas of this province and I know the Minister of Health likes to say that's being addressed, but you tell that to the people of Windsor, Essex, St Catharines and other parts of the province, and northern Ontario, and they will tell you they're not being addressed.

We see young people in our education system who have joined the teaching profession now being cast out, some with eight, nine, 10 years of service, who are still relatively young in the system, losing their jobs, and others, understandably, not moving out because they're in the senior years and don't have the opportunity to move out. You need a good blend, you need a balance of people of all ages in the system, and we're losing that, again because of this obsession with the tax cut.

We have many children—and this is most discouraging—in our society in Ontario heading to the United States to get a job. I haven't talked in the past to as many young people, young women, young men, as I have in the last year or year and a half who are heading to the United States because there aren't the opportunities here, because they don't see the future they used to see in what we called the province of opportunity. That's most unfortunate.

You know, it's always good when you point and say: "Look at how many people we've cut. Look at how many people we've thrown out of jobs." And you get away with it. People applaud until it's your next-door neighbour, your aunt, your daughter, your son, your father—in other words, somebody you know personally—and then it loses its political attractiveness. That's what's starting to happen in this province.

I want to touch on a couple of other items which I think are important.

The Ministry of Environment and the Niagara Escarpment Commission: I have received a letter which says, contrary to what the member for Dufferin-Peel wanted and spoke about in this House, and I'm sure the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, it appears that the Niagara Escarpment Commission administration and planning is going to be turned over to local municipalities, which (a) don't have the resources to handle it and (b) are unlikely to administer it in a way which will be fair across the province.

The issue of gas prices: I raised this issue today in the House. I think everybody in this House must wonder how they price gasoline in this province, in southern Ontario. The northerners know what it's like. They've had high gas prices for some time, and some of the people in eastern Ontario. In southern and southwestern Ontario we have seen the base now going up to about 56, 57, 58 cents a litre, in some cases 59 cents a litre, where before it used to drop down at its base to somewhere around 48

or 49 cents a litre. So obviously somebody is fixing this price and moving it up. They claim that there's a lot of competition, and there is a large number of stations in the province. But that doesn't mean that competition is producing lower prices, because they all seem to go up together and come down together, and now it's mostly moving up together. I believe the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the Minister of Transportation should be addressing this matter with the oil companies in this province. It's not only gasoline; it's home heating oil prices that are moving up rather drastically at the same time.

I want to deal as well with the issue that I raised with the Premier, and that is the issue of companies making huge and unprecedented profits and still laying people off. In years gone by, when a company was losing money, that company dropped its number of employees; it had to lay people off. Usually it kept the infrastructure there to bring the people back when good times returned, but they laid people off. People were justifiably concerned about that but they understood that if the company wasn't making money in the capitalist system that we have, our free enterprise system, then they were going to have to lay people off. They understood that.

But what we are seeing today is a situation where companies are making in many cases unprecedented profits or at least substantial profits and at the same time they're firing the bodies out into the streets. I think the sense of fairness that people in Ontario have is such that they don't believe that should be the way things are. I understand it's a more complex problem than simply saying some are downsizing while they're making profits. I understand that. I'm not trying to be unfair in that regard. But companies are going to have to address that problem.

Members will know that our Premier was in Davos, Switzerland; this is an economic gathering which has pretty prestigious people from the financial world and political leaders from various jurisdictions who attended. One of the speeches that was made—I will call it a keynote speech—addressed that very problem. I quoted it in a question to the Premier the other day about how there is a social responsibility among those who make profits from our system to assist in meeting the needs of those people who are the losers in this highly competitive society.

1630

My colleague the member for Renfrew North made reference to Pat Buchanan in the United States when he was running for the Republican nomination. Did you notice that in the various states in which he ran the issue caught on quickly? Mr Buchanan was probably unacceptable for other reasons; if you think of his rhetoric and some of the things he stood for, he was unacceptable for other reasons. But the other candidates began to address the issue, because they understand that middle-of-the-road, moderate Americans, like Canadians, have a sense of fairness.

When I see banks, as they are in all of the communities, turfing people out into the streets, reducing their hours of operation, replacing people with machines, I become very concerned this is happening. It's not as

though the people they're throwing out into the streets are highly paid people. They're not even unionized people, so their ability, in most cases, to increase their pay significantly or their benefits is limited by the fact that they do not have collective agreements but have individual agreements, or if they have collective agreements, they're not negotiated by a trade union.

I notice that the bank I deal with, for instance, did the same thing. I wrote a letter to that bank and outlined my opposition to what they're doing, because there are many services people obtain that really require discussion with another human being. To totally mechanize, to totally computerize, to totally eliminate people from the workplace makes us ask the question, where are the jobs going to be in the future? Where are those jobs going to be for those people? It will be extremely difficult.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): If they were losing money, where would you put your money? In a pillowcase?

Mr Bradley: You're jabbering over there. I'm trying to be fair to the government. I'm not really pointing the finger at you. I'm talking about a societal problem that I believe has to be addressed, yet there you are defending the companies no matter what. If they raise their profits to the ceiling and throw people out in the street, you're going to defend it. I'll leave that to you to defend, because I think a lot of people in the government caucus wouldn't defend that. I think there are a lot of people over there who are listening to the people they represent and saying: "We have to find ways of addressing this problem. We have to find ways of finding adequate employment for people and not simply relegating people to the sidelines."

When you see huge, unprecedented profits at the same time that people are casting the bodies out into the street, it cannot help but be disconcerting.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: It's really sad. Some of the members who have been here a while would know. When you had some of the Conservative members before, there was a listening to this kind of argument, there was a compassion; there wasn't the sour face and the casting aside of what the opposition might say. Obviously what's happened is that we have the Reform Party elected. That's what we have: We have the Reform Party elected in this province. In years gone by, with the people in the Conservative Party, there was a social conscience there. There was an understanding of having to address these problems in a practical and compassionate and thoughtful way instead of simply the ideology being fired back constantly: "The company can do no wrong, the private sector can do absolutely no wrong. Simply leave them unfettered and all will be fine."

I listened to Frank Stronach the other night at Brock University. He was a guest speaker at Brock University. One of the things that Mr Stronach said, when he was asked the question by a packed audience—people were interested in listening to what he had to say—was that he did not support totally unfettered capitalism, that he thought there was a social conscience which should be there, that there was an obligation to society at large which should be there.

I think there are some people in the business sector who believe that, so I hope the government addresses these concerns. I'm not optimistic when I hear what comes from the government benches this afternoon, but I know there are people within the government benches who have that kind of compassion and will want to address this problem in the months and years to come.

Mr Pouliot: Monsieur le Président, I would ask the kindness, the benevolence of the House. My understanding is that there has been a tacit agreement reached by the three House leaders as to the division of time, ie, the Liberals, both the member for Renfrew and the member for St Catharines have split the 90 minutes evenly, and I'm asking acquiescence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Are you splitting with somebody else?

Mr Pouliot: With two of my distinguished colleagues, three ways.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Yes. It's difficult to understand the member.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed. The member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Bradley: She can't understand your accent, she said.

Mr Pouliot: Thank you very, very kindly. One of the distinguished members opposite has mentioned, and I think rightly so, in a moment of spontaneity, that it was difficult to understand what I meant or what I said, and I will try to be more direct and to the point in my remarks.

The opportunity under supply gives members a forum to reflect the views of the people who have elected them, the people who placed their faith in the local members. There are 130 members of the Legislative Assembly at present. My understanding, by way of an announcement last week, is that the number will be reduced significantly, drastically, to 103, while the population of Ontario, as you well know, continues to increase, so the riding of Lake Nipigon, which is the largest geographical riding in the province of Ontario, fully 26% of the overall land mass, will be asked to be even bigger.

At present, I represent an area which is the size of the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia put together and multiplied by two. Simply put, it's the size of Germany. So I take a great deal of pride in representing the very special people of our very special part in the province of Ontario, although when I do so here at Queen's Park, Toronto, I am geographically closer to Miami, Florida, or Halifax, Nova Scotia, than I am to some parts of our great riding which extends, as you well know, to the shores of Hudson Bay, nestled between Lake Superior and the largest lake beyond the Great Lakes, that of Lake Nipigon.

It's an honour, after the two members of the Liberal Party—namely, the member for Renfrew North and the member for St Catharines, arguably two of the best orators in the House—and to be followed by two of our very own members, Hamilton Centre and indeed Sault Ste Marie. We will split our time three ways, approximately

30 minutes per member, and I wish to thank the government for granting us unanimous consent.

I too listened intently while I was knocking on doors for the fourth time. Well, of course, I'm referring to the last 40 days of campaigning prior to the June 8, 1995, election. I had read the mantra, the manifesto, the platform of the government today, a government that's sort of locked in. We know the feeling. We've had three successive changes of government in the province of Ontario after 42 long years of a monopoly where the Conservatives were the order of the day for over four decades.

1640

I remember vividly. I don't have to reach inside and look at what the Common Sense Revolution, the CSR, committed. Ever since June 8, I must give credit to the government. They have addressed the Common Sense Revolution with an unprecedented zeal. Come hell or high water, no matter who gets hurt, no matter how many men and women providing essential services are tossed out the door, they shall deliver on the mantra—a balanced budget within five years.

We agree the deficit at present is \$9.5 billion. A \$5.4-billion tax cut brings us closer to \$15 billion. They have to reconcile the cut of 30% to the provincial income tax level based on the overall federal tax.

Incidentally, Mr Speaker, people like you will not benefit. I know of your circumstances. I've followed your career. We were elected within two months, you and I, you with a different party, the Liberals, and myself with the movement party, the New Democratic Party. It's neither you nor I who will benefit, and we do immensely better than the majority of Ontarians. Do you know, sir, that the richest 16 people in the province of Ontario, with the 30% tax cut, will put in their pockets, those already bulging pockets, an additional \$2.2 million, that 16 people equal \$2.2 million? Do you know that people making more than \$90,000 a year will grab more than 50% of the tax cut?

You do know that those who are marginalized, those who are the less fortunate, people working for the minimum wage, people receiving a small salary, spend their money. There's no other choice. They have to have shelter and food, the necessities. One hand takes, one hand spends. That's how you create jobs. You don't create jobs by giving 50% of \$5.4 billion to people who make more than \$90,000 a year.

The government would have us believe the money will trickle down. It's going to trickle down by way of maximizing, if it's not already done, the RRSPs; it will trickle down to foreign markets in their constant search for tax savings; but ordinary Ontarians will not benefit from the tax cut. It's as simple as that.

We have a \$9.5-billion deficit. I need your help by way of a parallel or an analogy which I believe has some validity. Let's take some money we can relate to. Assuming someone would have a debt by way of credit cards, plastic, of some \$9,500, a consequential, a considerable sum for people of moderate means, the philosophy would be to up the credit limit by another \$5,400. Chances are that you would not make ends meet, that disaster would

loom. You'd be further in the hole. But this government—the people opposite, are determined to balance the budget, to create 725,000 jobs, to give a tax cut to people who need it the least, because they're on the hook, because they went to the general public soliciting, seeking the support so they could have a majority, and come hell or high water they will adhere or attempt to adhere to this program.

Last week, a week to be remembered, the Chair of Management Board told us what we all knew at this time, that 10,600 women and men providing essential services will lose their jobs and that further cuts were coming, that we can expect that the chainsaw and the axe will cut once or twice more—only at the civil service level we're talking about 20% of the workforce; it could go as high as 27,000 people who will lose their jobs—striking with passion, striking with vengeance without a published business plan.

In the riding of Lake Nipigon, our daily bread is and we are dependent on resources. I know many people on a first-name basis. That's the way we conduct our affairs where I live. We have a little more time to get to know one another, to listen to one another. The Ministry of Natural Resources, the fire base in Manitouwadge—toute finie; we don't need you any more. For as long as the sun shines and the river flows there will be some catastrophe. From time to time we will have major snowstorms; more often than not there will be an evacuation on an annual basis, people leaving the northern reserves near the bay or some small remote communities being threatened by a forest fire. It's the normal laws of nature.

This government has said: "We don't need your services any more. You will relocate someplace else." Those people will lose their jobs. The people at transportation will lose their jobs; 1,900 of them will be let go. That has to create a negative drag. If you don't have a job, you're not going to spend as much money. The private sector, in all fairness, will pick up some of the slack. Some people will benefit, but people will not be making the same wages and the same benefits that accompany good wages. It's very simple. The government wants to save money, so it will offer the contractor less money. The contractor needs to make a profit, it's a normal reaction in business, so they will pay people less or reduce the service. That's the sad legacy of this government.

Government does not listen too well to members of the opposition but they might listen to what the Dominion Bond Rating Service—the friends on Bay Street—has said: "The promised 30% reduction in personal income taxes is the single biggest hurdle to balancing the budget." They're telling them: "You guys are on the hook. What you're doing here is wrong. You will begin to dislocate. You cannot do it all." You're not going to meet your objective of 725,000 jobs. We know that. The growth isn't there. Even Mr Eves, your Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, has already said that the growth figures he had hoped for of some 4.5% have been reduced to 2.5%. Those are facts, not beliefs, and you have to factor those in. You will not be able to meet your objectives, simply on the mathematical basis—there are too many ifs.

1650

What is being said here is that there are alternatives, not with a policy of blame; we all agree we cannot go on spending more than we take in if our children and future generations are to have something to look forward to. It's quite simple. No one will deny this.

Applause.

Mr Pouliot: My colleagues in the New Democratic Party are applauding. Most of them are in their seats today and I'm very appreciative of their commitment. I only wish the television would focus—it cannot; it can only focus on the Speaker—so they could see the kind of support we give one another with the New Democratic Party.

What strikes me is that by way of a newsletter the people of Lake Nipigon have responded en masse. When asked a very simple question, "Would you sacrifice the tax cut to maintain essential services?" I was surprised that by a ratio of 75% *grosso modo*—approximately—people in the riding of Lake Nipigon have said to the government: "If it means you're going to cut that many services"—because they are gutting some departments—"do you know what you can do with the tax cut? You can stick it in your ear." They're that bold. They don't want to see their friends in Manitouwadge, in our small community, begin to despair by way of losing their tenure, losing their jobs. They want the community to be alive.

The Common Sense Revolution states emphatically that \$300 million less will be spent on highways, that this government intends to spend \$300 million less than we did when we were the government. No wonder signs are already beginning to appear alongside some of our major highways saying, "Potholes, bumps, for the next 30 kilometres." When we were the government, we weren't perfect, but we didn't advertise the bumps; we fixed them.

There seems to have been a departure, and it's neglect. Jobs are not being done, the chance to dream has been taken away, the disparity between the haves and have-nots is growing on a daily basis, and the middle class, which pays for all that, sees itself under a state of seige. People cannot look to the future with confidence.

The government said it would not impact education at the classroom level. With respect, tens of thousands of the little ones, people who were to attend junior kindergarten next year, come September, at the beginning of the next school year, will not be able to attend. So it won't be impacted; there simply will not be classrooms for those.

Almost every school board in the province is laying off teachers. They're getting their pink slips saying, "Don't come back next September." That's impacting. When you impact teachers, you impact classroom education.

I want to wish you well, Mr Speaker. I want you to keep your health, for health is next in line after education as they move up the food chain. Recall it was the less fortunate, the welfare recipients, people who were asking for a chance to be like us, to be like the others and to participate. They hit them without mercy: 21.6%. They called them names. They were referred to as downtrodden low-lifers, people who really did not wish to work:

21.6%. Then the government moved up the food chain to satisfy the insatiable appetite, the command, of a 30% tax cut. They had to deliver, so they went after the civil servant, and they're just beginning.

Then they said they wouldn't go after health care. They will padlock some hospitals. People will be joining longer waiting lines at the hospitals.

Education is being impacted. I've been through transportation and the Ministry of Natural Resources in our riding. What I'm saying here is that what is being done, sir, is wrong; there are alternatives. Put the brakes on. Don't go so fast. Where is the human dimension? You have men, women and children, elderly, who are placing confidence—their future is in your hands. Don't scare the living hell out of them.

Miss Jones is concerned. She's 74 years old—a true story. They've got her so confused with their Common Sense Revolution that she doesn't know whether she will pay \$2 for a prescription or the price of the drugs. And she survives on some \$16,000 a year, so she's just a little above the threshold. She's not rich. She asks the government not to become a number in the book or a face in the crowd. She's becoming a little frail. She doesn't have that many years to start over again, does not understand all the intricacies of a sophisticated marketplace. She just wants to be a good citizen, wants to believe that tomorrow will be a little better, doesn't want to see the government go from \$100 billion to \$124 billion, \$125 billion, \$126 billion. After all the cuts, she expects the deficit will be reduced, but now she's beginning, with our help, yes, to understand that this is going to cost big time, and there's no need.

When you're in debt, the first thing you do is you look at yourself and you reduce spending. The government deserves some applause; let's be fair. They've shown courage. They've adhered to a good deal of their platform. I only wish they wouldn't have placed themselves on the hook for another \$5.4 billion, because everything has to go so well even to come near. If the growth is not what they expect it to be, those 725,000 jobs—not entirely the government's fault. A lot of things we have no control over.

Traditionally, after a presidential election in the United States there is a downturn in the economy. It doesn't have to be a recession, but if your performance does not match that of the past three years, your mathematics are out of whack and then you will have to have the same courage to say, "Let's look at a sideshow; let's examine what we can do in mid-term," or the choice to say: "No matter what, we have said we would do this. No matter how painful, we will do it." And the very same people who believe in the government that does what it said it would, ironically, will punish people who go too far in order to meet the very penny of what they said they would. There's an equilibrium here. There's a balance. It's not all or nothing.

1700

Somewhere in there we have to take different venues sometimes, because they are good for the populace. The only thing that counts is that the 11 million Ontarians know that someone's in charge and that the sun will rise

many times, that while we tighten up our belts, equity and fairness will continue to be the order of the day as much as possible. People aren't asking for a lot more than that. They're asking for a chance to dream. They're asking for some realistic and reasonable objectives to be reached in a reasonable time. They want good health care. They want their sons and daughters to be well educated, preferably more than they were themselves. They want people in their communities to be able to integrate economically and to participate. They are never jealous of the fortunate people.

I was reading over the weekend that two years ago the president of Magna International, Mr Frank Stronach, a pioneer, with salary and bonuses and options, grossed \$38 million, only to be exceeded last year, 1995. The same proud pioneer Canadian made \$47 million. I'm not the one who says that. It's reported in the *ROB*, *Report on Business*, of the *Globe and Mail*. Is it fair, with the highest of respect and all the best wishes to Mr Stronach, that with a revenue of \$47 million in one year Mr Stronach be given a 15% tax break? If you have a choice, remember Miss Jones, 74 years old, with a small cat as her sole source of companionship in her humble apartment, in her cubicle, who's going to take a hit, a small hit but nevertheless a hit. Because she makes \$16,000 a year, she's going to have to start paying for some of her drugs. Does it make sense to you? The list goes on.

If it were applied equitably today, across the board, 50% of the tax break would go to people who make \$90,000 a year or more. Give me a break. I need one, but I don't need the tax break at the expense of others. If, after a day's work, I go down on Yonge Street and I see people panhandling on every corner—they don't want to be there. I used to see individuals—not as many—now I see families and more with small children. That's us. How do you feel inside?

Sometimes I think we're all on a waiting list. The disabled are seeing their transportation curtailed. They're being cut off for a few dollars more, for the mere sake of a buck.

Mr Murdoch: You missed the boat a long time ago.

Mr Pouliot: Sorry, sir, I don't think I missed the boat. But I'm really starting to wonder that, when all is said and done, the people who can run the fastest are running away from those people. We don't seem to have the same responsibility to one another. It used to be that we were as rich as the poorest among us, but now it doesn't matter as much. It seems that some cannot afford to have a conscience or they have the conscience of their means, and it disturbs me. It disturbs the people of Lake Nipigon. Like the great, great majority of Ontarians, we don't want to hurt people. It doesn't make us feel very good and we don't get rich that way.

So I'm asking the government, hey, come on. I know you said 30%. It sounded good at the time. You wish you could do it. That would be a benefit, more money in our pockets; we could spend it. But on the other hand, maybe give a little more to people who have less, who need it more—isn't that what's it all about?—or take your time, take more time doing it. Your responsibility is to balance the books before you enact a tax cut.

Maintenant mes deux collègues, celui de Hamilton-Centre et celui de Sault-Sainte-Marie, avec votre bonne volonté, bien sûr, vont se permettre de vous informer judicieusement durant la prochaine heure, à peu près 30 minutes chacun. Je vous remercie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to concur with my colleagues here who have just said that the member for Lake Nipigon, from where the curvature of the earth is much more apparent than anyplace else in the province, has just given a wonderful speech. I agree with everything that he has said and I share his concern and his compassion and feeling.

We're asked today in this place to support the government in its interim supply motion, an interim supply that comes to us without any context. We have not in the number of months, eight or nine months, that this government has been in office been presented with any comprehensive plan, any budget that would have with it the supporting documents. My colleague Mr Phillips keeps reminding us of this. There's no budget. We're passing interim supply and we don't know what the big picture is yet, although, mind you, we have lots of indications of what the big picture's going to look like in the not-too-distant future, because everything we've seen so far certainly paints a very bleak picture for everybody in this province except for those who are well-off, who are in positions of influence and who are friends of the Tory party of Ontario.

I'd like to start my few minutes this afternoon by sharing with you some thoughts that have been growing in importance in my mind and in conversations that I have with people in my jurisdiction, the wonderful city of Sault Ste Marie, as I go back, usually on Thursday nights, and spend Friday and weekends chatting and talking and working with them to try and find ways to protect them from the onslaught of the government of the day in the province of Ontario.

It wasn't so long ago that I finished university, and a friend of mine left this province to go to a Third World country to work, to help the poor in the world. I often felt a little guilty that I didn't go, and when that person would return, we'd talk about the work that was being done, that she was doing, and the work I was doing in Ontario. I would ask her, "What is it that I could be doing in Wawa, Elliot Lake, Sault Ste Marie, Toronto, in Ontario to help you?" She for a time worked in Mexico; then she moved over to Nicaragua and ultimately El Salvador. She said to me, "Tony, probably the most important thing you could do for the people of the Third World was to make sure that Ontario did not become a jurisdiction of that sort," where there was a small group of people who were very rich and very powerful and a huge group of people on the other end who were very poor and not so powerful, with a very small middle class. I have to say to you, that as I look around today at the province of Ontario, I'm wondering if we aren't moving in that direction, if we aren't becoming more and more a jurisdiction where fewer and fewer are going to have both resources and power, and more and more are going to feel powerless and are going to be without the resources to take care of even the very basic needs of life for them and for their families.

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If the announcements that have come from this government in its short period in power so far are any indication of where we're going, or are any indication of what's going to be contained in the budget that will finally come to us in May, then we are I think, sadly, moving in that direction.

The premise of this government, as it rolls out its agenda, as it takes this province down the road to Torydom, is that somehow, some way, there just isn't enough to go around, that we don't have enough resources to share in an equitable, fair and just fashion with all of our brothers and sisters. I remind you of a story in a book that I'm sure many of you in this place have had the opportunity to read over in your life, and if you haven't you've probably heard about it, and that's the story of the person—they say in it he was a young man; God only knows, it may have been a young man, it may not have been, but certainly a young man would probably be more apt, or a young person would be more apt to have done what it said in this story.

Anyway, it's the story of a group of people who had spent some time listening to a speaker and found themselves at the end of a day very tired and hungry, with obviously not much to eat, or at least not much that was present to eat. A young man walked by with a basket of loaves and fishes, and forgetting that his mother had probably sent him to the market to get the loaves and the fishes, he saw all these people who were in need of food and he decided to offer them. He said, "Here, this is what I have to offer." When other people saw the generous spirit of this person coming forward and laying on the table what he had, they began to discover themselves they also had some food they perhaps should be offering.

One of the understandings of this story is that somehow somebody came along with a magic wand and waved it and all of a sudden there were fishes flopping all over the floor and loaves just multiplying by the hundreds. Well, it's my strong feeling, having thought about this story for a long time, that that probably wasn't the case, that what happened was that once the people gathered and saw the very generous offer of this person to put on the table, to put out for everybody else to avail of what he had, they themselves discovered they had some too. At the end of the day, they had enough to feed everybody and then tons left over.

I suggest to you that in a province like Ontario, where we have so much, where we are so fortunate, where if you look around—it doesn't matter what community you look at—there is wealth, there are resources and there is the ability of communities to share in a way that up to this point anyway in our history has made this province one of the most fortunate provinces, one of the most sought-after jurisdictions in all of the world for people to come and to live. But I'm sadly afraid we've come to a time in our history when that may not be the case any more.

If we look at what this government has done so far, at the turmoil it has created, at the chaos that is out there now as people go from one day to the next not knowing if they're going to have a job, not knowing, if they have a job, whether the people who are now without work or

who may be expecting to be without work are going to come in and buy the products and services they're offering because they just don't have it—so there's a lack of confidence out there in the consumer that's creating chaos, but even beyond that, the obvious signs that there's something not right, that there's something not happening that is in the truest tradition of the democracy we've come to appreciate and to enjoy here in Ontario.

The first day this place opened, about two or three months after an announcement was made in July that you were going to cut 22% out of the take-home pay of the poorest citizens among us, whether it was in Hamilton or Sault Ste Marie or Toronto, just across the province—we had a whole raft of people who lost a quarter of their income. I say to any of you here, just imagine your own income being cut by a quarter, the chaos that would create for you and the pressure that would cause you and your family to make ends meet, particularly when you're at the low end of the income scale to begin with.

When we arrived here on the first day of the opening of Parliament, we saw thousands of people who spoke very loudly and clearly by way of the demonstration in front of this jurisdiction and the violence that ensued on that day, a precursor of further such gatherings around this place, a gathering not seen in the history of Ontario and of a violent nature that I think shocked us, shocked the people who were out there as it happened to them and came upon them and that I think I would be safe in saying shocked the general public across the province.

We have a government here that has reversed labour laws. The member for Hamilton, who will speak next, will know of that because he participated very actively in the little debate that we were able to force across the province on that particular law. We as a government had found a way to bring an unprecedented level of labour peace in this province, not a strike of any significance, no violence on picket lines for three or four years while our bill was in place. Now we have a law that tips the playing field in favour of management again, and I suggest to you that the labour unrest that you have already seen, that has produced the kind of violence we've seen around this place and across the province, will be the order of the day and continue.

This is the image of this government by way of the actions it's taken, by the way it's governing, by the very fact that it has not taken the time to lay out for us a comprehensive, full-scale plan of what they propose to do so that we can be critical of it or supportive of it, as the case may be, as we try to get a handle on how it's going to impact those we care about most: those we represent, our constituents, those we live with in our neighbourhoods and our families and friends. There's a real sense of concern beginning to develop. I don't think any of us can go home to our constituencies on weekends without getting some sense of the angst that's out there, of the fear that's out there, of the real sense of gloom that's out there as we walk through our malls and meet with our constituents.

I tried over the last two or three months to get some answers from this government. I was more fortunate than many in the province today who are trying to get through the door to speak to government and particularly to

ministers of this government about the agenda they're embarking on, about the programs they're proposing and about the cuts they're making. I had a chance, at one point on the standing committee on estimates, to speak at length with the Minister of Community and Social Services, share with him the environment he's creating for those people among us he's supposed to be most directly responsible for—the poor, the marginalized, the disabled—and ask him, as I did three or four other ministers, if he had done any kind of impact study, if there was any kind of blueprint he was looking at that would tell him at what point the cuts he was making were becoming counterproductive, were creating more problems than they were solving. Sadly, there was no answer to that.

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I even asked him and his colleagues—I know he is an honourable man and in the personal exchanges I've had with him I find him sincere and caring and compassionate—if at some point, as the Minister of Community and Social Services, he determined that the cuts he was being forced to make by the cabinet he belongs to, by the government he is responsible to, were just too much for the people he was responsible for as minister, would he go to his colleagues in government, would he go to the cabinet table with the members who are on the other side of the table on that committee and say, "Let's back away from the tax cut here because it's just creating too much pain; it's just making the targets we've set too difficult to reach and too many people are being hurt."

Sadly, the minister was not willing to concede that. He was not willing to tell me that he would do that. He said, as so many other ministers and the Premier say here day after day in this House, he gave me the mantra: "We're a province in crisis and we have to get our financial house in order. We're spending \$1 million a day"—or an hour or whatever it is—"on programs, and so we can't be compassionate. We can't afford to care. We can't afford to make sure that those who are most vulnerable and most marginalized in our communities are looked after."

The Minister of Education: I appeared before him one day and had a discussion with him. I had with me at that time two students from Humber College in their second year of social work. They were very concerned. On their behalf, I asked the minister, given the promise that this government made in the election to create some 750,000 jobs, just exactly where those jobs would be, because these two students, very serious students, committed to their studies and wanting to do something valuable with their time, wanting to contribute to society in a positive way, were concerned. They're in social work. They recognize that the government is cutting the programs they would traditionally have expected to get a job in.

They were asking the Minister of Education, through me, if he would give them some direction, some inkling, some idea of where it was these 725,000 jobs were going to be, so that if they needed to make a decision now that they were halfway through the program as opposed to when the program was all over and they found they couldn't get a job in the area they were trained for and had to shift gears, they could do it sooner than later.

Alas, I got the mantra again. I got the rote answer that these ministers are becoming so proficient in. As a matter of fact, I noted at one point that as time went on, they didn't have to read the mantra any more; many of them had it memorized; it just came automatically to their mind and they just laid it out, and that was the answer to everything. It's really too bad, because it would have been an excellent opportunity, I thought at that point, for the Minister of Education to have spoken to these students through me and to have shared with them the plans he had for them.

We had a program presented to us here last Thursday, and the opening two lines of that program were, "This is a recipe for new hope for the province," and, "It's to create jobs." There wasn't one job created. All we saw in that whole package was the cutting of jobs; 2,100, to be exact, in the Ministry of Natural Resources in northern Ontario.

The Ministry of Natural Resources in northern Ontario was one place that a whole lot of people who grow up in the north, who love the north, who want to work in the north, who want to protect the resources of the north, who want to make sure that those resources are there, not only for them but for their children and for all of you who do not live in northern Ontario, who live in southern Ontario and come from time to time to visit and to recreate—but alas, those jobs will no longer be there.

You're effectively cutting out half of the jobs that people from across this province and indeed from other areas could have expected to come and compete for and, if they were lucky, get and then contribute in that way to their own livelihood, to the livelihood of their families and particularly to the quality of life of this province. But alas, those aren't there.

All we hear from this government, all we've gotten from this government so far is cuts: cuts to the amount of money people are making on social assistance, cuts to the programs and services they depend on to try to carry them through these very difficult times they're experiencing and, ultimately now, cuts to programs that are going to affect our ability as an economy to continue, to renew and to take advantage of any opportunity that might come at us in the next five or 10 years as the world changes and as the economy adjusts to the changes we're experiencing.

I spoke one afternoon at some length with the Minister of Health. It was at that particular point in time that I was able to relate most clearly the experience of having chatted with my friend who works in the Third World and shares some of the signs I see that may be indicating that perhaps that's where we're heading.

I don't think anybody who works here could have missed the phenomenon this past winter in downtown Toronto of the great number of people sleeping on the streets, sleeping on park benches, sleeping on grates, not being able to find warm housing for themselves and indeed whole families of people. I have been here not as long as some, but certainly long enough to know that I have never seen the numbers I've seen this past winter on the streets of Toronto.

Three people froze to death on the streets of Toronto this winter. Was there one whimper of concern raised by

this government? Was there any questioning why that might have happened? Was there any task force set up to try to discover just exactly what's going on there? No, nothing. There was nary a whimper, nary a voice of concern. It reminds one, if one has any understanding, has done any reading or done any visiting at all to a Third World country, of what happens in those jurisdictions and what is beginning to creep into society in Ontario and on to the streets of one of the richest cities in the world, the city of Toronto, under the leadership and the guidance of this government.

In speaking to the Minister of Health, I also suggested to him that if he was at all interested in the larger question of health care and how we prevent disease from happening, if he was concerned at all about making sure we were doing things in our jurisdiction across the ministries that would promote health and prevent sickness, if he understood or had any sensibility for the whole question of the determinants of health—I spoke to him about the impact the cuts his government imposed on the poorest among us by way of the welfare cut in July 1995 and if he didn't understand that in the long run that would create a class of people who were not well, who were sick, who would not be able to feed themselves properly, who would not be housed properly, who would not have the clothing they needed to keep themselves warm in the winter, and that in the long haul it would cost us more.

As a matter of fact, I mentioned the fact that at that particular point in time we had an outbreak of tuberculosis in the city of Toronto. They've moved quickly on that one, because they know that will be really embarrassing. We're not sure, though, where that's gone or how it's developing or if we have a problem of tuberculosis in the core of Toronto, but we do know that tuberculosis is most prominent in areas of low socioeconomic conditions, and that's exactly what this government is creating in this city and in many other cities across the province.

I asked him, "Don't you think it would make more sense to go back on some of the decisions that you've made?" and to stop some of the decisions that we knew were coming to take away from people the opportunity they need, for example, to recreate? Some of the money this government passes on to communities they use to build swimming pools and recreation centres; to have in place libraries where people can access books to learn about ways of taking care of themselves and their families; to have parks so they can go for walks and breathe the nice fresh air that's out there. I asked them, "Don't you think it would make more sense to be doing that kind of thing as opposed to moving so quickly and so single-mindedly on the tax break for the rich?" The answer again from that minister was the same as I got from the Minister of Education, the same as I got from the Minister of Community and Social Services—the mantra, "We can't afford to do that."

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In this, the richest province in Canada, probably one of the richest jurisdictions in all of the world, we can't afford to give people what it takes to feed themselves, to house themselves adequately and to help them to have a lifestyle. We're not talking extravagant here, a lifestyle

that provides a bit of recreation in the communities where they live with everybody else, as my colleague said earlier, to afford them some moments in the sun so they might feel good about themselves, so they might, if they're not feeling real well, get better in that way and participate more fully in the communities where they live and in the economy of those communities, and as this government wants to do, cut back on the amount of money then in the long haul that we spend on health care because we have fewer people getting sick. But the program this government has embarked on by way of its mantra and its commitment to the tax cut is in fact going to cost us all a whole lot more in so many ways down the road as we see it unfold.

I just wanted to talk for just a couple more minutes, because that's all I have left before my colleague from Hamilton speaks, about my own community. Mr Spina, the member for Brampton North—I think he was here earlier, and he's left; he's from Sault Ste Marie, actually, a fine fellow with a good family in my community—asked me what I meant when last week I spoke of a real sense of—I don't quite want to say “despair,” but certainly not the same sense of enthusiasm and optimism, that's now in Sault Ste Marie, that was present in Sault Ste Marie just after Christmas in January of this year as I walked through the malls, as I encountered some of the small business owners in those workplaces. They shared with me the Christmas they had and some of their concern about the economy.

I compare that with the Christmas of 1995, when people were so buoyed. In Sault Ste Marie, in partnership with the workers and management and the financial institutions, we had given new life to Algoma Steel and St Marys Paper and the ACR. Now, by way of the cuts this government is making both to the money that people were getting, that was being spent almost immediately in the shops and stores of Sault Ste Marie—that was now gone, by way of the cuts just in July and September. There was a little study done and there was a loss of between 200 and 300 jobs. The economic impact that has on our community by way of the spending power that's gone because those people no longer have money—not to speak of those who, because of what they saw ahead of them and the program that was being projected by this government, expected to lose their jobs.

So yes, there's less optimism, there's less excitement and enthusiasm about the future today, I suggest to you, than there was a year ago, and it's because of the agenda of this government that is not creating work, not creating those 725,000 jobs that it said it was going to create, but instead, cutting jobs with every announcement it makes.

Those are some of the thoughts I have today; I'll have more on further occasion. I had opportunity this weekend to hear from some people who are having some real concern about the impact of the cuts on education, but we'll have further opportunity to speak about that at a later time.

I just want to thank people for listening and encourage this government to please, in the interests of justice and civility, take another look at the tax break, take another look at the program you're implementing, because it's hurting those who are most vulnerable and it's hurting the

province as a whole. Our economy is not going to be as healthy as it could have been had you been a little less hurried and a little less draconian in the cuts you're making.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to begin by first of all congratulating and complimenting my colleague Tony Martin, the member for Sault Ste Marie, on his excellent overview of how he sees things from the north. We in our caucus know that Tony is certainly one of the most conscientious members we've ever worked with. He cares deeply about his community. His track record before he was elected speaks to that and his continuing service here in this place on behalf of Sault-it's also confirms the kind of commitment Tony Martin has to fairness and justice and compassion and caring, which are all the very things this government chucked out the window the moment it assumed power last year and began the process of systematically dismantling all the very things that have historically made this a great place to live and, in my opinion, contributed largely to Canada being twice chosen by the United Nations as the best place in the world to live.

I think those of us on this side of the House would agree that given the agenda of this government, the decisions to date and the decisions you are yet to make, our ability to achieve that kind of recognition and support for the kind of society and culture we have in Canada and here in Ontario is over. It doesn't matter what part of our society we look at; we see the theme that comes from the Common Sense Revolution, which is, “The bottom line matters more than people, making sure that our wealthy friends get a huge tax cut,” a tax cut where over 60% of those savings and those benefits will go to the top 10% of income earners in this province. Over 60% of the value of that tax cut will go to the top 10% of income earners in the province.

We see very clearly the agenda of this government and we believe our arguments and our thinking are supported and the proof is there to be seen by those who want to do so. I would say to my colleague from Sault Ste Marie that one of the things this government needs to be worried about is that while it's announcing all these changes, it needs to recognize there's a change happening out there. The number of people who are watching these kinds of debates, who are phoning MPPs' offices asking for information, who are talking among themselves based on fact, based on community need, based on personal experience, is growing.

There's a coalition that's coming together across Ontario of groups and community activists and labour leaders and church leaders, and they're coming together because this government leaves no part of Ontario that matters to most working people untouched. You virtually attacked every corner. You sit over there and you think that by talking to your friends and your staff and staying in your bunker, somehow the rest of the province doesn't really know what you're doing and everybody really is being conned by the messaging put out by your spin doctors. The fact is that you're very blissfully driving yourselves off the edge of the cliff electorally, and I for one couldn't be more pleased, because regardless of who wins that next election, the first thing that matters is to

make sure that this nonsense, this damaging, spiteful, mean-spirited damage that you're doing to this province, comes to a halt. That's the first thing.

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As to who replaces you, Libs and the NDP will battle that out during the campaign. But I think that more and more people are very, very quickly realizing that unless you're very wealthy, there's no benefit for you in keeping Mike Harris and the Reform/Tory Party of Ontario in power.

Most of you just seem quite glazed over when that's raised, and so be it. The proof will be in the pudding. I think there are some courageous members of that caucus, and I won't mention their names, because I don't want to embarrass them with their own colleagues, but as time goes on, I want to say to those of you that are sitting there now and those that aren't in the House but have joined in expressing some concern along the way will be treated with greater and greater respect by your backbench colleagues as they begin to realize that you will be one of the few that has a chance of being re-elected because you weren't following blindly this Common Sense Revolution and what it means to the average person.

There's going to be a big difference spin-doctoring your way through a term in office and knocking on doors asking people to please re-elect you, because the fact of the matter is there's still a whole lot more people that aren't your wealthy friends than are, and the way a democracy works, those votes are all equal, and while their voice may not be equal in terms of who you listen to, elections are the great equalizer.

There will be very few of those who are blindly from the back benches applauding like trained seals everything that is said who will begin to see that their day of reckoning is coming and will begin to just offer a little bit of a tip of the hat to their colleagues who were smart enough and compassionate enough to recognize getting re-elected happens on the doorstep; it doesn't happen following blindly what the Premier and his key handlers say.

An example of that took place in my riding of Hamilton Centre over the weekend, and it dealt with the issue of workfare. It was a community forum on workfare. It was held at the self-help centre on West Avenue, and it was attended by a capacity crowd on fairly short notice to talk about the effect of workfare and what it means to communities like ours in Hamilton.

I just want to mention some of the participants who were there, because I think it's important for this government to realize there are other voices that are being listened to besides those that are drafting your news releases.

For instance, Andy Mitchell came in from the Metro Toronto Social Planning Council and addressed the forum, and was joined by Susan West from the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth and Karen Bridgman-Acker, who both are from the Hamilton Against Workfare Coalition.

Gerry McDonnell and Peter Cassidy were there from CUPE, a union that represents workers whose rights and jobs and futures this government is running roughshod

over, people who have a great deal to say about workfare and the kind of virtual slave labour that this government wants to legalize that will take the place of those CUPE workers who have long served our community and are about to be dumped on the social scrap heap by this government's move to privatization and introduction of workfare.

The United Church of Canada was represented by Reverend Jim Dowden; Third Sector and Local 5 at RGB by Peter Wickett and Chris Holland; PUMA by Julie Gordon; the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care by Karen McMaster. I just want to say, on the subject of child care, that again we hear consistently across the province that very few of the attacks this government has launched do not hurt families, or hurt children in particular. Karen certainly spoke to that when she talked about the impact on single mothers of the introduction of workfare. Wayne Marston, the president of the labour council, was present, as were a number of other organizations, and the vast majority there was individuals on their own.

The feeling was that workfare is very much a part of this government's attack on working people, on the quality of life of working people and on the ability of communities to work together to help each other. We find consistently, beginning with the announcement of cutting support to the poorest in our society by almost 22%, all the way through to Thursday's document that was tabled indicating certainly not all, but some of the details of what this government is planning to do and how they're going to find the money to give back to their wealthy friends, attack on working people.

I want to spend the balance of my time discussing briefly some of the issues in this document, woefully inadequate as it is. I would say very sincerely that this was a pretty shabby piece of business on Thursday, when you left the impression you were tabling a document that suddenly was going to show what you're going to do and how you're going to do it, and you offer up nothing but public relations, smoke and mirrors and a whole lot of spin-doctoring but not a lot of detail. There are still tens of thousands of people and their families who work for and on behalf of the citizens of Ontario who still don't know whether they've got a job at the end of this year, because you haven't even had the decency to offer up details that show people exactly what's going to happen.

I want to begin with the ministry I am responsible for in terms of my critic's role, the Ministry of Labour. One of the first sentences under the restructuring initiatives is the insulting statement, in my opinion, that says safe and healthy workplaces are the top priority of the Ministry of Labour.

We have heard from the Minister of Labour on every occasion how much this government cares about workplace health and safety; words, words, words, but when we look at the actions of this government it's the exact opposite. This government will be remembered, if for nothing else, for their ability to adopt an Orwellian doublespeak that surpasses anything any other government of any political stripe in the history of Ontario has been able to achieve.

To make a statement like that and then turn around and shut down the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, introduce your anti-worker Bill 7 legislation, cut back on benefits to injured workers who are on WCB, disallow workers an equal say in how the WCB is run, slash the training given to workplace health and safety representatives, to do all those things is the opposite of showing any kind of compassion or caring for workplace health and safety; it's the exact opposite and it is truly insulting to the women and men who have dedicated their lives to the issue of WCB and workplace health and safety. There are hundreds of them, people who toil on behalf of their colleagues, with growing caseloads of their co-workers who have been injured on the job. It's insulting to suggest to those people, who know the legislation inside and out, that somehow this government gives a whit about health and safety or WCB or the working lives of the people who work for a living on a day-to-day basis here in this province.

1750

In this package, on Ministry of Labour, the government says, "The ministry will review...." My colleague the member for Riverdale talked earlier about code words, and I think it's important to focus on that, because there really are certain words—code words, buzzwords, key phrases—this government uses over and over that are intended to leave the impression of one thing but certainly mean another. When this government says it's going to review the Occupational Health and Safety Act and show that it's going to be part of saving \$8.2 million over two years, that says to workers and unions in this province that you're ripping open the Occupational Health and Safety Act to go after more rights that workers already have.

Given your track record and the fact that you're opening this legislation to save money, there's no doubt you're going in there to water down the rights workers have in this province so you can appease your buddies and your pals and your friends who already control the lion's share of the wealth and power in this province. While some of the Tory backbenchers laugh and kid about things like that, I can assure you that there are thousands of workers who don't find this funny at all.

The other thing they're doing: It says, "The ministry will amend"—another little word—"the Employment Standards Act..." There's not much left after we've gone after WCB, gone after occupational health and safety, completely replaced the Ontario Labour Relations Act without one minute of public hearings, attacked injured workers who are on WCB. By the time you also open up the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Employment Standards Act, there's not much left, is there? In none of those cases have you done anything for workers or for the families of workers. It's all been to water down rights, take away rights, make it easier for their rights to be ridden over. That's what you've done consistently.

When you're dealing with the Employment Standards Act, we're by and large talking about non-union workers, because they don't have a collective agreement. They don't have the benefit that belonging to a union can bring when you're dealing with health and safety issues and grievance procedures and improving benefits when the

company's making money. They don't have that benefit. What they have in many cases is the Employment Standards Act, and in most cases they don't know what rights they have in there, because how would they? How would they know about it unless you're going to teach them what it is? We already saw what you did with the health and safety legislation, where you gutted the training from 120 hours to 56. That's where unions have a say. That, by the way, is going to save \$2.4 million.

We know from the track record of this government that when it opens up the Occupational Health and Safety Act, it's going after rights workers have, rights they have to have their jobs and their lives protected, which this government's taking away. When you go after the Employment Standards Act, you're starting to go after the most vulnerable, who are fortunate enough to have any kind of a job, usually at minimum wage, and you're going to water down their rights in there.

Another word they like: "streamline." Got to love it. "Streamline the delivery of mediation, conciliation and arbitration services by the Ministry of Labour...." Do you know how much this little housekeeping matter is going to save? Streamlining the delivery of these services will save \$9.5 million over two years. That's already after years of belt-tightening. Again, it's all got to be set in the context of this government's track record on workers' rights, on worker health and safety. When you take it in that context and look at saving \$9.5 million from streamlining the delivery of mediation, conciliation and arbitration, it means you're going to be gutting those services out of that ministry. That's exactly what it means, and I'll be here to stand in my place and prove the point when you finally table the documents that show exactly what you mean instead of your cute little phrases.

Streamlining administration of the Pay Equity Commission: We already know what they think about pay equity. We know what they think about making sure that women have their decent rights upheld in this province by virtue of the legislation they've repealed. That's going to be part of a measure that saves \$11.2 million. Does anybody actually believe, given the track record of this government, that they're going to do anything at all to the Pay Equity Commission that goes towards saving \$11.2 million that doesn't take away a right or a protection that women in this province already have, as meagre as they are? I would think not, and the proof will be in the pudding, the proof will be there, make no mistake.

When we talked earlier about information and knowing what the law is, after we've watered down the Employment Standards Act and gutted the Ministry of Labour's ability to enforce the laws, one of the things they're going to do is to close the ministry's library. Let's get that out of there, let's make sure we privatize that in some fashion or do something that makes it more difficult for the average worker to access information about labour laws, interpretation of labour laws, about studies that have been commissioned and filed with the ministry; let's make it all the more difficult to do that. That's what that means; that's the intent.

In total, from the Ministry of Labour alone, this government is planning to slash \$40 million. This is not a ministry that transfers huge sums of money. This is

very labour-intensive. It deals with ensuring that the laws are followed around labour relations and taking the measures necessary when those laws have been violated. You take \$40 million and 457 people out of the system and again, in the context of what this government has already done to working people, there's no doubt that this government wants as easy a time for employers to do whatever they damn well please. That's exactly what their agenda is with working people.

I'm glad the Solicitor General's in the House today because I want to comment briefly. I have a few things I wanted to mention, but a couple of things have struck me. Although I'm not the critic for this portfolio, I have had a relatively recent relationship with this ministry and, as I mentioned earlier today in question period, the government, without talking to any labour leader whom I can identify—and I've been on the phone talking to them across the province—I'm not aware of any labour leader who's been consulted or had an opportunity to have input on a decision that will have the Coroners Act opened up to remove the mandatory inquest for construction and

mining deaths. Again I say that initiatives like that cannot be looked at in isolation but have to be looked at in the context of what is the track record of this government when it comes to working people and their health and safety and their quality of life. Something like that can only add to this government's litany of attack and take-away from working people.

In fact, when I spoke with Tom Beatty, who is the business manager for the Hamilton-Brantford building trades council, he was advising me that the phone lines were already burning up around construction worker unions and their representatives about this surprise attack on rights that construction workers have, and I can assure the minister he will be hearing very loudly and very clearly from that sector of the labour movement.

It's interesting, when I was going through the SG and corrections portion of the document, they're also eliminating the Coroners' Council.

The Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Material omitted:
56	Contents	3	<p>SECOND READINGS</p> <p>Education Amendment Act, 1996,</p> <p>Bill 34, <i>Mr Snobelen</i></p> <p>Mr Froese 2268</p> <p>Debate adjourned 2268</p>
56	Table des matières	3	<p>DEUXIÈME LECTURE</p> <p>Loi de 1996 modifiant la Loi</p> <p>sur l'éducation,</p> <p>projet de loi 34, <i>M. Snobelen</i></p> <p>M. Froese 2268</p> <p>Débat ajourné 2268</p>

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
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Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
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Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oriole	Caplan, Elinor (L)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Tuesday 16 April 1996

Mardi 16 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 avril 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): Today is Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. Each year we remember the events that took place under the Nazi regime in Europe over 50 years ago, events that saw the attempted systematic extermination of a total race with the extermination of six million Jews.

Each year, as we commemorate the Holocaust, there are those who ask, why must we continue to dwell on the past; why not look to the future and direct our energies to forward-looking pursuits? The answer is as profound as it is simple. Without remembering and learning from the past, the possibility of having to relive that dark period in our history is ever-present.

Today there is evidence of cemetery desecrations, synagogue defacings, growing anti-Semitism, revisionist proponents proclaiming that the Holocaust never happened, all of it happening in an environment of supposed enlightenment, human rights and man's humanity to man. We owe it to the six million victims and to the ever-dwindling survivors of the Holocaust, those survivors who witnessed unbelievable atrocities at first hand and who, because of their age, will soon be gone, we owe it to them to alert all of those people and to warn them of the threats not only to those of the Jewish faith but to all of the members of our society.

We must always remember so that the world will never forget.

LISA LANGFORD

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'd like to bring to the attention of the assembly, and particularly my colleagues the Minister of Health and the Minister of Community and Social Services, the plight of one of my constituents, named Lisa Langford, who has Prader-Willi syndrome, a non-inherited genetic disorder that affects small numbers of people but is very serious.

This is a disorder which has multiple symptoms, including developmental handicap, behavioural dysfunction and an eating disorder which results in a constant sense of hunger and anxiety around food. The eating disorder, when combined with the low muscle tone, short stature and low metabolic rate of the person with Prader-Willi syndrome, can result in explosive weight gain over a very short period of time. People with this syndrome

need constant support and supervision. They must have a stable, structured and supervised environment 24 hours a day. Without supervision, the situation can become critical, and tragically 11 young people with this syndrome have died over the past four years because this kind of support was not available.

Lisa currently has no permanent residential space and she is wanting to work with her supporters at the Ontario Prader-Willi Syndrome Association and Family Service London to find that. I will be handing a note to the Minister of Community and Social Services and enlisting him in helping Lisa to find a permanent home.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise in the House today to announce to all members of this assembly that Peterborough has once again dealt with hospital rationalization and restructuring with a great deal of success.

Yesterday Ontario Health Minister Jim Wilson joined me and the residents of my riding for the opening of Peterborough Civic Hospital's new intensive care unit and St Joseph's General Hospital's outpatient clinic. The opening of both units is the product of many years of rationalization and consolidation. All critical care beds will now be located on one site, while most of the outpatient clinics will be situated at the other hospital. These openings are proof that when faced with the challenges of providing quality health care in a more efficient manner, communities such as Peterborough can rise to the occasion.

I wish to thank the many volunteers, hospital staff and members of the community who have worked tirelessly to make such an event a reality. Many long hours were spent in raising private sector donations. Donations for Civic's intensive care unit today have totalled \$1 million, and organizers anticipate an additional \$400,000 in the near future. My personal thanks to all those members of the community who donated.

Our government is committed to providing the people of this province with quality health care, and so are the people from my riding. Yesterday's opening is an excellent example of how successful our health care system can truly be when everyone works together.

JOB CREATION MEASURES

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): The Premier would have us believe that tax cuts alone will stimulate job creation. If this logic is true, why are the banks continually laying off thousands of their employees? A lot of banks have successfully appealed their property tax rates.

In some instances these reductions have amounted to over \$1 million per bank firm.

If what the Premier said is true, that tax reductions will create jobs, why is it then that banks that received millions in tax reductions while making millions in corporate profits are still laying off staff?

The broken promises on job creation are starting to sound like a broken record. This government should be taking the lead in job creation, working with industry and business to create jobs and prosperity rather than solely relying on a tax cut.

As it stands today, the government is placing its faith in business, believing that corporations will take it upon themselves to create the 725,000 jobs that Mike Harris promised. If the banks' track record is any indication, the promised job creation plan is then in serious jeopardy.

1340

CANCER PREVENTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): In March 1995, the Ontario Task Force on the Primary Prevention of Cancer tabled its recommendations to the government of Ontario. This report lays out a broad range of measures that must be followed if we are indeed serious about stemming the rising incidence of so many forms of cancer. In Ontario, we lose over 20,000 lives every year to cancer, many more suffer pain and anguish in the battle to recover, and treating cancer patients costs us in excess of \$1 billion annually.

We all know that we have to make informed lifestyle choices if we wish to avoid the tragedy that often follows a diagnosis of cancer. However, none of us gets to choose whether we breathe air or drink water, and these activities are unfortunately a growing mode of transmission for environmentally borne toxins that can cause cancer and other health problems.

Despite our tremendous progress in cancer research, too often there is no cure available when the diagnosis is cancer.

I've tabled a resolution asking the government to act quickly to plan the sunset of the release of persistent, bioaccumulative carcinogens. I'm sure every member in this House has been touched by the tragedy of cancer. I hope I can count on all the members' support when my resolution is discussed this Thursday at 10 am.

COMMUNITY CARE

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): It is my privilege to acknowledge the important work that the Community Care agency does in the Niagara area. Starting out in 1919 by Leone Taylor, the agency was originally called Associated Charities, later becoming Associated Services in 1971. It received its current name in 1993.

Community Care receives donations from the United Way of St Catharines, church groups, service clubs and many, many individuals. Clearly they depend on the help of others, and others depend on their help in their time of need.

This government is taking a proactive and progressive approach in acknowledging the important role that

volunteer groups and individuals offer to all Ontarians. We want to encourage those groups who are ever-present in providing a helping hand. Community Care is such a group. For years they have had a food cupboard, a clothing and household goods program and a very special Christmas bureau.

On behalf of my government and everyone they serve, I would like to recognize and thank the St Catharines-Thorold Community Care agency.

WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): This Wednesday, the Chatham-Kent YMCA will honour five women from Kent county as Women of Excellence. These awards are to recognize women who have made contributions above and beyond the call of duty to their community and to provide positive role models.

The five women being recognized are:

Shae-Lynn Bourne, who recently won the bronze medal at the 1996 World Figure Skating Championships and who, along with many other activities, is the spokeswoman for the Chatham-Kent child abuse prevention program;

Anne Coulter, who is the executive director of family services, Kent. She has volunteered for and served on many groups and boards which make Kent county better for everyone;

Ida Goodreau, who was the first female operations manager and first female vice-president of Union Gas. She implemented various policy developments that affected women at Union Gas and was very active in many community activities.

Dolores Shadd, who has been very active in many activities which benefit farm women and the community in general. In addition to her many awards, she was chosen by the National Film Board to represent farm women in the black history film *Older Stronger Wiser*.

Michelle Wright, a Merlin native, has twice been selected the Canadian Country Entertainer of the Year. Despite her busy schedule, she remains active in Kent county and acted as honorary chairwoman of the St Joseph's Hospital campaign to raise funds for a CT scanner.

I would like to congratulate all of these women and thank them as Women of Excellence.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This weekend, the Sault Star in my community ran a headline that read, "Health Cuts Can Kill, Forum Hears." "Residents accuse Premier of having blood on his hands at local meeting." The reporter who wrote the story that went under this headline, Linda Richardson, sat for a full afternoon with myself and my colleague the member for Algoma, Bud Wildman, as we listened to members of our communities tell stories of anger and frustration and real sadness as they recounted attempts by themselves or loved ones to access the health care system in our community.

You've heard me, Mr Speaker, on numerous occasions in this House ask the Ministry of Health to reconsider the

cuts to our hospitals, which have already done the very difficult and important work of restructuring and rationalizing and cost-cutting. I have asked them to put their tax break on hold until they can guarantee that people will not get hurt. This government has not responded to me in any way, either positive or negative, regarding these very important issues to the people of my community.

People are being hurt now. People are going to continue to be hurt. Some of the people who came in front of me told some very compelling stories, stories that brought tears to the eyes of many of the participants in the room. There were about 50 people there. I ask you to intervene and ask this government to stop the tax breaks, stop hurting people.

BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): On March 30, the Premier, Mike Harris, and several MPPs and I attended the Ismaili business and professional association's award ceremony in honour of outstanding individuals in their community who have demonstrated leadership, innovation, ingenuity and community involvement.

The award for overall outstanding achievement was given to Aneela Lada and Shameera Jaffer, president and vice-president respectively of BMS Softkey. Several other individuals were acknowledged in the areas of professional, business and junior achievers.

It gives me great pleasure to announce the winners in the area of outstanding achievement: Noorjehan Mawanee, chair of the refugee board of Canada; Dr Salim Deeya, professor at McMaster University; and Karim and Altaf Halanee, president and vice-president at Ultinet Computer Corp.

The awards for professional excellence were given to Amir Ajanee, senior vice-president of Cara Operations, and Meenhas N. Mohamed, executive vice-president of Quoram Funding Corp. For excellence in business, Fareed Veeya, president of Raleigh Industries, and Azad Datoo, president of Progress Sports Inc, were selected.

Lastly, for excellence in the junior achievement category, Sabrina Kassam and Arif Datoo, both students, were selected.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the members of the House for unanimous consent to allow a member of the government to announce the terms of reference for the public inquiry which was promised by the government House leader on March 20.

The Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? We don't have unanimous consent. Oral question period.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, who we do expect is in the House and—

Mr Wildman: He's out doing the terms of reference.

Mrs McLeod: If he does not return to the House, I'm quite frankly not sure who is there for me to ask my question to. So I'll stand down the first lead question and defer to my colleague for the second lead question until the minister arrives.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, I want to pursue the discussion of yesterday, because I listened carefully and I read closely your response to my question, and I'm not yet sure that I understand the government policy in this respect. So let me try again.

Minister, as the senior policymaker on energy and hydro matters for the Ontario government, are you and your government prepared to sell Niagara Falls?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the honourable member opposite for the question. Niagara Falls is not ours to sell; it's an international waterway and it is not up for sale.

Mr Conway: The Ontario government and the Ontario people have, over nearly a century, developed very considerable public assets in terms of hydro-electric resources on the Canadian portion of Niagara Falls. Minister, are you and your government prepared to sell the Ontario government's hydro-electric resources and assets at Niagara Falls?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I quite agree with the honourable member opposite that the citizens of the province have developed a considerable asset in Ontario Hydro. It's an asset all citizens are proud of, it's an asset I think we all appreciate, and it's an asset we want to protect.

Ontario Hydro has found itself in a situation with a heavy debt load and with uncompetitive rates. It is my job, as Minister of Energy, to determine how to protect those assets and to make sure those rates remain low and that the power provided to the citizens is done in an affordable and a reliable way.

Mr Conway: The minister is very careful to say that she and her government are anxious to protect the Ontario public assets at Niagara Falls, so I ask again: In her interest of protecting the public assets at Niagara Falls, are she and her government prepared to sell Ontario's hydro-electric assets at Niagara Falls?

Hon Mrs Elliott: The reason we are looking at Ontario Hydro is to determine how best to maintain and secure low rates for electricity in this province. In so doing, we have been seeking advice from people all across this province and looking at examples of what is happening in other jurisdictions which are facing similar difficulties as this province is facing.

We have not yet determined how we should do that. We have not yet determined if private capital should be injected into the system to help it. None of those questions are determined. We are seeking advice and we will listen to the advice that is being brought to us in an attempt to make sure we find the appropriate way to ascertain and maintain those low rates.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): It's incredible that this minister will not rule out at least that

very basic selloff of one of Ontario's most important and valued assets.

HIGHWAY FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I will direct my question to the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance. Last Tuesday, the Minister of Transportation made the following claim, and I quote him directly from Hansard: "We are going to be putting more money into our highway infrastructure this year than we have in the last six years."

On Thursday, as you know well, the so-called interim business plans were released. Strangely, the business plan for the Ministry of Transportation showed a \$70-million cut to road repair and maintenance funding, and at the same time, \$11.5 million was cut from the funding for northern highways. That comes on top of \$110 million in road cuts last summer and at least \$250 million from municipal road funding in last November's economic statement. We are now over \$400 million in cuts to road funding.

Minister, I wonder if you can provide us with any insight as to why your colleague the Minister of Transportation is under the impression that road funding is somehow on the increase.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): No, I cannot.

Mrs McLeod: Given the fact that yesterday the Solicitor General also seemed to be at some odds with the Minister of Transportation on the issue of raising the speed limit on certain Ontario highways, I guess I find myself wondering whether the Minister of Transportation is in communication with anybody in cabinet or whether he simply says what comes into his mind at a given moment, because, Minister, last Tuesday your colleague the Minister of Transportation also said: "The good repair of our highways is a very critical thing. For our economic growth, we must pay attention...."

I don't think there are very many people in this House or in this province who would disagree with that statement. Our highway system is critical. And yet, while the minister was saying this just last Tuesday, he must surely have been aware that he was about to cut \$70 million more from a budget that he had already savaged. So I have to be curious as to what happened. Did the Minister of Transportation somehow convince the cabinet that cutting road maintenance in his budget would somehow enhance Ontario's highways and improve our economic growth?

Hon Mr Eves: It is my understanding that the reduction in the MTO budget is a reduction in capital construction allocation and the construction administration portion totalling, as the Leader of the Opposition correctly points out, \$70.5 million over two years, but it is also my understanding that it does not affect the maintenance budget with respect to the provincial highway system, which will be maintained.

Mrs McLeod: It seems to me that this falls into the category of a wishful hope that the government is going to be able to do more for less, as they're fond of saying, and I think the Minister of Finance should be aware that

they have a great deal more to do with a great deal less money.

The member for Hamilton East gave us one of the most recent anecdotes this morning, and I think people across the province are running into this kind of situation. The member for Hamilton West was caught in a traffic jam at the corner of Bronte and the QEW. It was a traffic jam that was caused by the fact that three separate drivers had to pull over because they got flat tires driving over some of the bigger potholes on the QEW. There is a great deal of road maintenance that needs to be done in this province, Minister, and there is no one who doesn't notice the deterioration in our highways.

I think it's possible that your colleague the Minister of Transportation got caught in his own spin documents, because I certainly got confused by them. The interim business plan that his ministry released last week contains the following passage: "The ministry is shifting its focus from expansion projects to preserving Ontario's infrastructure." That's how they explained how they were going to cope with this cut. Then it goes on to detail the millions of dollars in cuts on top of the cuts of last summer and on top of the cuts of last fall.

The Minister of Transportation, despite those cuts, insists—this was his statement last week—that he will spend more on highway maintenance this year than has been spent in the last six years. I ask you, as the Minister of Finance, do you stand by the commitment made by the Minister of Transportation, and will you confirm that in your budget next month you will show an increase in spending on highway funding? If that is not the case, why are you confusing the Minister of Transportation so much?

Hon Mr Eves: I hope I'm not confusing anybody, let alone the Minister of Transportation. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that she will have to wait until, of course, the budget is tabled next month before she sees what the exact figures are. But I have every confidence that the Minister of Transportation is indeed going to maintain, if not increase, moneys for maintenance and preservation of our highway system. I might point out to the leader of the official opposition that there are still considerable moneys being spent on capital projects in the province of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: I'd just make a note. Apparently I said both "the member for Hamilton East" and "the member for Hamilton West." I assure the House it's the member for Hamilton East. The member for Hamilton West I'm sure is herself telling the minister about the potholes.

1400

WATER QUALITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. There has been a lot of concern recently about the quality of water in Ontario, and in particular the quality of water in the Collingwood area. You know that a parasite, cryptosporidium, has been found in the local water supply. Last week, Minister, you assured all the residents of Collingwood that the water was perfectly safe. You said in this House that the water is safe.

This is a bottle of Collingwood water. It looks safe to drink, but many residents believe it contains the parasite cryptosporidium. The 152 people in Collingwood who reported cases of cryptosporidiosis, and there are now 30 confirmed cases, don't believe you. They don't believe their water is safe.

Minister, many people blame this problem on agricultural runoff. In view of this fact, do you think it was prudent for you to cancel the Clean Up Rural Beaches, or CURB, program, that provided assistance to farmers to separate agricultural runoff?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): First, I would like to point out that the tests to date—and they've been very, very extensive tests—have not found the cryptosporidium to which my honourable colleague opposite refers. It is only prudent and it is only fair to the people of Collingwood that we do not find ourselves involved in needless fearmongering.

Mr Hampton: Oh, come on.

Hon Mrs Elliott: No, I must say that. This is a very important issue for a community that's facing a summer tourist trade. The water in that town is safe, and we must be very clear about that.

I would agree with the honourable member that there has been a problem. It is a most unfortunate problem. The town of Collingwood has taken a number of measures to deal with it immediately, along with my ministry, to help solve that problem, but it is not an ongoing problem and should not be discussed as such.

Mr Hampton: This is indeed the new Ontario when the Minister of Environment and Energy stands up and says, day after day, that there's no problem when it's very clear to everybody who lives in Collingwood, including the local MPP for Collingwood, the Minister of Health, that there is a problem.

We examined the dismantling of the Ministry of Environment's funding in the so-called business reports and found a lot of doublespeak. It states on page 4, "Over the last three years the municipal assistance program has provided \$300 million to municipalities for water and sewage infrastructure programs," and then it says, "The program will continue." The fact is that our government, the government I was a part of, contributed over \$578 million for water and sewer infrastructure, not \$300 million.

What you don't make clear is that most of the so-called \$187 million that's set aside for 1996-97 is already committed to projects. That means there's only \$42 million available for new projects like Collingwood. Minister, \$42 million doesn't go very far when it comes to water treatment. Collingwood's treatment plant will cost \$20 million to take care of this problem. In conversation with officials from OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, we were told that no new applications are being accepted for the municipal assistance program.

Can you guarantee that your cuts to the clean water budget and to the municipal assistance program will not jeopardize municipalities' water and their capacity to provide safe, clean water to the people of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I thank the honourable member for the question. We have committed to making sure that \$300 million is spent on water and sewer infrastructure in

this province. The integrity of the water of this province is important to this government.

The Ontario Clean Water Agency, to which the honourable member refers, was an agency set up to encourage and find new ways to establish funding for water and sewer infrastructure. We are working with that to find ways to increase the funding for sewage and water treatment. Sewage and water treatment are the responsibility of the municipality, and as a province we are attempting to find ways to help those municipalities deliver the services to their citizens.

Mr Hampton: We don't need a lecture on the Ontario Clean Water Agency. Our government established it, and our government put some money in that this government is now cutting. This minister should know her own budget. There's only \$42 million remaining in the ministry budget for these kinds of projects, and Collingwood alone would take \$20 million. The minister misses the point. There is no money in her budget for communities that have to deal with water problems, and no way to assure clean and safe water.

I want to quote from Sam Morra, the executive director of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. He says the reduced provincial funding for the municipal assistance program will threaten Ontario's supply of clean drinking water at the same time that opinion polling shows people are becoming very concerned over clean drinking water.

Communities across Ontario will be facing problems like those in Collingwood, yet we know the money isn't there to do anything about it. Your colleague the Minister of Health went back to his riding in Collingwood and said the problem will be taken care of.

Let me ask you this: If \$20 million of the \$42 million is going to be spent in Collingwood, what happens to the rest of the communities in Ontario that face problems with clean drinking water?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I reiterate that we are very concerned about the quality of the water in this province. The Ontario Clean Water Agency, formed by the former government, was set up to care for the sewage and water treatment in this province and to provide the funding. I suggest that in putting together an agency that was not only the funder but the operator and builder, they discouraged investment in water and sewage treatment in this province. It's our job to find ways to redirect that funding and get investment back in this province to help those municipalities that need to provide water and sewage for their citizens.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the minister who earlier today went over Niagara Falls in a barrel. In six days we are going to be celebrating Earth Day, and instead of encouraging environmental protection in the province and developing new safeguards, we've seen that the government is systematically eliminating environmental safeguards in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Who's your question to?

Mr Wildman: The Minister of Environment and Energy, who is dismantling her own ministry. The

minister has virtually eliminated the operation of her ministry with the cuts that were announced to finance the irresponsible tax cut promised by this government. The Ministry of Environment and Energy is losing 800 positions over the next two years. That's one third of the ministry's workforce. That shows what a low priority this government puts on environmental protection in this province. Over the next two years you're reducing the enforcement and compliance activities of your ministry by 25%. In the face of these kinds of cuts, how can you maintain, as you just did to my colleague's question, that you are maintaining environmental protection and safeguards in this province?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): Like all ministries in this government, I am going to do my part in the Ministry of Environment and Energy to help get this province back on a sound fiscal footing. A number of areas within this ministry require change and will be changed. Environmental assessment is a perfect example. We have spent millions and millions of dollars on talk, without results. There are many ways, focusing on our core businesses, in which we can cut costs and provide environmental protection to this province.

Mr Wildman: It's obvious from the minister's response that she's committed to cuts. Our question is whether she's committed to environmental protection.

I'm sure the minister is aware of a report prepared by her ministry and published in October 1994 in which the ministry concluded that there were over 1,730 active PCB storage sites across the province with approximately 106,000 tonnes of PCB wastes, with 13,000 tonnes of that high-level PCBs, and 65,000 tonnes of those are owned by this government. According to your ministry's report, 5.8 tonnes of PCBs are stored across the street at 99 Wellesley Street West, the Whitney Block.

There are many sites across the province that need to be monitored and inspected on a regular basis. The minister, I'm sure, will recall the fire at St-Basile-le-Grand in Quebec, a PCB storage site, a few years ago. These sites need to be secure and safe and they have to be inspected and monitored.

1410

In view of the cuts to your enforcement and compliance branch in your ministry, will you tell us how often these sites will be inspected to ensure that we do not run into serious problems of PCB spills or contaminations involving all of the sites that you identified in this report?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would agree with the honourable member across the way that the storage of PCBs is a serious problem. In fact, there are 116,000 tonnes of PCB stored in the province of Ontario and they didn't all get here since June 1995. This is a serious problem and we are dealing with this as best we can.

It is the responsibility of the generator of this waste to deal with it. We are encouraging many of the industries that are new fledgling green industries in this province which have a number of new and innovative technologies to deal with PCBs to come forward to companies and help them destroy their PCBs in the most environmentally benign way possible.

It is also possible to shift those wastes to Swan Hills in Alberta for destruction, and it would have been easier for many of those companies to deal with their PCB waste if the borders had not been closed by the federal government.

Applause.

Mr Wildman: The members opposite are applauding an answer that is dealing with destruction of PCBs when the question was about monitoring and inspection of ongoing PCB sites. The minister didn't answer the question.

It's interesting. If the minister is so concerned about the sites that were identified in this report in October, why is it that the ministry has seen fit to eliminate the money from the ministry budget that Ontario would have required if it was to begin to meet the responsibility for its own PCBs as stipulated in the Canada-Ontario agreement? Why is it you're eliminating the money that this government would require to deal with the ministry's own PCB wastes, if you're so concerned about them?

Hon Mrs Elliott: There are a number of ways of dealing with PCB waste, no matter who the generator of the product is. We are required right now in this ministry, as in all other ministries, to live within limited means.

Mr Wildman: So in other words, you're not going to deal with them.

Hon Mrs Elliott: We will deal with those as best we can and encourage those new companies that have inventive ways to come forward and destroy those PCBs as soon and in as an environmentally benign manner as possible.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): If I can have the attention of the House, we have a visitor in the west lobby, the former member for Ottawa Centre, Mr Michael Cassidy.

PRIVATIZATION OF LCBO

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, there's a growing concern in the province that you're about to disband the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and turn liquor sales over to private concerns, private operators, with all the potential problems that surround that.

The LCBO report that was recently published tells us that over half a billion dollars a year in profit comes to the treasury of Ontario. It provides a safe, efficient, controlled way to retail liquor and wine. It gives consumers a wide selection of products, and importantly, it restricts the sale of alcohol to minors. In other words, it's an outstanding success.

Why, Minister, would you abandon a component of government that's clearly working for the benefit of Ontarians and why then would you abandon the LCBO?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I want to thank the member for the question. First of all, the government has not made a decision to abandon the LCBO in its present

form. The government is, however, looking to do things in a better way.

While some of those ads which have been played by the workers within the union allege that the restriction of the sale of alcohol to youth is beyond reproach in the province of Ontario, I want to relate to the member that the experience in some other jurisdictions, for instance in West Virginia, which has gone to a privatization scheme, is that the degree of social responsibility has improved under the private system. I was very much concerned with this and actually I'm going to have to deal with the chairman of the LCBO to put some sanctions against employees who do sell to underage people. As a result of these ads I inquired to the chairman of the LCBO, and at the present time an LCBO employee is given a two-hour lecture if he sells to an underage person. Quite frankly, I don't believe that sanction is severe enough and I believe the system is not being tested enough at this point in time.

The bottom line of this is that the present system is not doing the job as far as I am concerned. I believe a private system probably could do a better job of checking on the sale of alcohol to younger people than the public system is now.

Mr Crozier: Minister, you'd be interested to know that in debates in 1986 in this Legislature, the now Solicitor General accused the government of the day, saying, "It wants to Americanize this province." With this legislation it sounds like you want to Americanize it as well.

"A recent CBC poll shows 60% of the people in Ontario are opposed to privatization. The LCBO has made many moves recently to modernize itself: it has better hours, cleaner stores, better-stocked outlets and more convenient access within the store. It provides an excellent opportunity to market Ontario wines, and they have offered, both management and union, to make further improvements. Minister, I ask again, why wouldn't you just try and fix and make better what we have, and why would you give up? Why wouldn't you continue to support our wine industry in the province of Ontario?"

Hon Mr Sterling: I have no intention of abandoning our wonderful wine industry in Ontario. The real question is, can we do better than the present system? I believe we can either through improving the existing system or changing the present system in total or in part. I can guarantee you one thing: The transfer payment or the profit which this government is now receiving from the LCBO under a new proposal will only increase and never decrease. There is no—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sterling: No, prices do not have to go up as a result of a change in the system, but if the system is changed so that the alcohol can be sold more efficiently, then we the taxpayers will benefit and the consumers will benefit from even lower prices.

SPEED LIMITS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. Minister, I wanted to tell you how pleased I was yesterday to hear you disagreeing with the reckless

proposal of your colleague the Minister of Transportation around raising the speed limits to 120 kilometres per hour. I'm delighted that you understand that speed kills and that it is really important for us to do that.

You indicated in the Legislature yesterday that you were worried, if the speed limit were raised, for the ability of the police to actually implement a zero-tolerance policy and you talked about the resources that would cost.

1420

My question today is about your comments to the Toronto Sun regarding police officers in respect to speed control, and I quote you as saying, "They're having trouble now with respect to controlling speed on the highways and this could just exacerbate the problem." Minister, you're admitting that police officers now, at the current rates, are having problems controlling speed on our highways. That's not a surprise to any of us who use those highways. We know that speeding is not controlled and that 120 kilometres is a very common speed that we see. You say there are resource problems in even controlling speed at 100 kilometres an hour, yet your government cancelled photo-radar, a relatively inexpensive and effective way to reduce speeding, a way that protected the occupational health and safety of police officers.

Mr Minister, before photo-radar came in, in the year 1993, the OPP issued 154,151 speeding tickets, but in the six months that photo-radar was on, there were a total of 141,511 speeding tickets—in other words, almost as many in six months. So in light of your comments that you're concerned about speeding, that you want to exercise zero tolerance and that you can't do it, even with your additional 85 cars and your wonder crew of 27 new police officers, what are you going to do to control speeding on the 400 series of highways with the current speed limits?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I believe that in the GTA region, where we have installed the special units, they are doing an extremely effective job. They're not just dealing with speeding, because as the member will recall, when we cancelled the photo-radar project, our concerns were the fact that we were not dealing with dangerous drivers and people who had inappropriate driving habits.

We have a list of examples as long as my arm with respect to the kinds of violations we've been able to deal with with these specialized units. People have been driving, as an example, with their feet rather than using their arms. We've had them on their cell phones. They've had the wheel taped so that they didn't have to deal with it while they were doing a variety of very dangerous things behind the wheel.

We've been able to stop these kinds of activities and have been able to effectively deal with dangerous drivers and inappropriate driving behaviour. There's no question that police across this province have many, many challenges, but I think by and large they're dealing very effectively with the challenges they have to face.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Minister, no one disagrees that those forms of dangerous driving are serious. No one has any problem with that, but the real problem is that the issue of speed has been shown by many studies to be an

extraordinarily important factor in terms of increased numbers of crashes, the increased level of injuries and fatalities in those crashes. Mr John Bates of Mothers Against Drunk Driving stated there's simply no question that an increase in speed inevitably leads to increased fatalities and crashes. Yet, when we talk about a formal increase in speed, you say no, that wouldn't be proper because the police in fact could not control that, and you were very clear that you didn't have the resources to control speed if it were formally increased.

In reality out there the speeds have increased since photo-radar was destroyed by your government. They did go down substantially during the time photo-radar was on, and in fact what you have created for yourself is a public safety problem by doing away with the technology that would have freed up police officers to look for those dangerous drivers you're concerned about. What are you going to do about the current public safety problem, which you identified yesterday to the Toronto Sun, where you said that police officers were having a hard time controlling current speed limits?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think in one year or two years in office we're going to do a much better job of dealing with public safety problems than that party did in five years in office. We are moving in many of these areas. I mentioned yesterday in response to a question that we put 85 additional marked cars on the road in the last couple of months.

We're in the process of restructuring the OPP, which will free up over 300 officers to be back out on the highways, on the streets of this province—over 300 officers. We're reviewing the paperwork burden, much of it placed on the police by the party opposite, to see if we can't free up officers to spend more time out doing real police work rather than behind a desk. We're taking a look—

Mrs Boyd: And cutting the budget.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Hey, Bob, where's the money? You're cutting the budget at the same time.

Hon Mr Runciman: Yes, that's right. We are indeed.

We're taking a look at new technologies, again to free up officers, to put more officers on the front lines where they ought to be.

INTEREST RATES

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Mr Minister, following a report released by Industry Canada, a constituent called my office making inquiries regarding interest rates. What does our government intend to do with respect to the extremely high interest rates being charged by chartered banks on Visa and MasterCard accounts?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Thank you to the member so that we can clarify our position on it. I too am very much concerned with the high interest rates that both Visa and MasterCard accounts are charging, as well as other credit cards. Currently, these interest charges are some 12% above the prime lending rate. However, the member should know perhaps that rates are controlled by

the banks, which are in turn controlled by our federal government. I believe it would be in everyone's interest if these interest rates were lowered.

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Minister. Indeed, I believe as well that it's a process of gouging and is not acceptable these days. As the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, you have the responsibility to represent the consumers of Ontario. Are you going to do anything on behalf of the people of Ontario regarding this very serious issue?

Hon Mr Sterling: Yes. On behalf of the consumers of Ontario, I have taken the liberty of writing the minister responsible for Industry Canada requesting that he undertake a review of this matter on behalf of our consumers in Ontario. In addition, I have written to the Consumers' Association of Canada to pass along my support for their position on this matter.

PRIVATIZATION OF LCBO

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'd like to ask a question to the Solicitor General, and this follows up from my colleague from Essex South, who posed a question earlier this afternoon to the minister in charge of the Liquor Control Board.

The minister on October 28, 1986, made a very impassioned speech in this House about the safety concerns, the security concerns of privatizing the sale of liquor in Ontario. We know it is this government's mandate, and the minister has just said in this House this afternoon that he is bent on continuing with the possible dismantling of the LCBO. We are very concerned about the lack of control, especially with the sale of alcohol to minors. I would like to ask the minister this afternoon, does he believe that privatizing the sale of liquor in Ontario is going to contribute to greater security concerns in this province?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): That's a very speculative question with respect to what may or may not happen. I think the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations indicated to you earlier today that no decisions have been taken with respect to this issue. I'm sure that if indeed the minister and the government reach a decision to move in this direction in any way, shape or form, there will be very thorough discussions and consultations with my ministry, other elements of the government and the public at large.

Mr Ramsay: You say it's a speculative question, but just last week when your Minister of Transportation said he was prepared to raise the speed limits on the 400 series of highways up to 120 kilometres an hour in this province, you bailed out and said you didn't think that was a big safety concern in this province, and you nixed the idea that came from your other minister. Now you have a minister of the crown saying, "We are going to deregulate the sale and control of alcohol in this province and put it in the hands of the private sector." We've already seen in the Premier's riding some convictions on the sale of tobacco under the new act, and we would expect that same thing is going to happen if you do that to alcohol.

1430

As somebody who is the chief cop in this province you should be concerned, and I'd ask you again, don't you share the concern we have that if you start to privatize the sale of alcohol, then minors are going to start to have greater access and we're going to have some grave social problems here in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr Runciman: I disagree with the premise of the question. The minister has not made any statement with respect to any firm direction in which this government is going to proceed relative to the LCBO. Those of us who have been around this place—and the member likes to quote old Hansards from 1986—I recall the debate at the time and what it was around, and it certainly was not around the privatization of the LCBO; it was around the Liberal Party's desire to put beer and wine in corner stores. Now they're suggesting there's some real hazard to public safety if we even consider privatization of the LCBO. Get your act together.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I found your answer to my question yesterday rather patronizing and insubstantial. No matter what you say, we're hearing from more and more women who are feeling that the rug is being pulled out from under them as they try to get ahead. What do you have to say, for example, to Patricia Gravelle, an Orillia mother of two, who has already taken more than \$11,000 in student loans to attend nursing school? Last fall she wrote to the Premier and said:

"How does it benefit Ontario if those of us who have struggled so very hard to climb back into the workforce now have the ladder kicked out from beneath us, sending us tumbling back into a vicious cycle of dependence on family benefits and social services?"

Minister, are you listening to women like Patricia Gravelle? What do you have to say to her?

Interjections.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): It's a little difficult to hear in the House these days, but I think I caught the gist of what the honourable member was saying.

First of all, I think part of what we're looking at is that the assistance for post-secondary school education is clearly the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Training and not the Ministry of Community and Social Services. That should be the responsibility of OSAP and the Ministry of Education and Training. This change will also necessitate the elimination of unnecessary and costly duplication between the two ministries. Clearly in most cases—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I hear some interjections from across the floor, but in most cases people under the new system, under OSAP, will be in a position to receive more money and more benefits and more assistance to complete their education than before.

Ms Churley: The minister knows full well, but he's not admitting it today—I myself heard the Minister of Education say that these rules may change as of next

year. Right now he is saying they will only have to pay back \$6,000, but we're fully expecting that they may well have to pay it all back.

I'd like to quote to the minister something that Sally Barnes, a well-known Conservative, said 17 years ago: "We believe there is growing recognition that a society which handicaps women, 52% of its population, handicaps itself and its very future." Minister, your government is handicapping a lot of women in this society, whether you admit it or not.

Let me tell you about Patricia Condie of Toronto. The father of her child left less than two weeks before their wedding date, taking the family business and leaving her the bills. She wrote to the Premier: "Have you ever had your dreams right before your face and then had someone rip them away?... I have a chance to get off the system but, Mr Harris, you are doing your best to keep me on."

Mr Minister, I ask you again, what has your government got against the women in the province of Ontario, and more pointedly, single mothers?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I would clearly refer the member to Hansard, since she's got them in front of her. She asked the same question yesterday; I assume the answer will be the same. But I might take the opportunity to point out to the honourable member the real fundamental problem here. This is a document from 1993 called *Turning Point*, and it was produced by my ministry, at that time under the leadership of Tony Silipo, whose picture appears very prominently in it as well.

However, clearly the problem here is this, and it's acknowledged here: "This extensive review and consultation process has made clear the fact that the current welfare system, a product of the 1950s and 1960s, is out of step with the economic and social realities of the 1990s."

So what have they done? From page 9: "The social assistance system cannot be fixed. The time has come to abolish the welfare system as we know it in Ontario. The government is planning a fundamental transformation of social assistance to a new set of programs whose goals are employment and independence."

Interjection.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As I hear the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition here, they clearly identified the problem as well. In fact—this is the red book now—they said as well that "It has now been two years since the NDP government promised to 'scrap the welfare system as we know it' and replace it with programs that both encourage people to leave social assistance and give them the opportunity"—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been answered.

NIAGARA FALLS CASINO

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Just lean over and ask him.

Mr Froese: He needs to tell the rest of you.

I understand, Mr Minister, that you were in Niagara

Falls yesterday making an announcement regarding the Niagara Falls casino. Can you advise the House if an interim facility site has been chosen?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to thank the member for St Catharines-Brock for his question. We're polite over here. I'd just like to say that I was in Niagara Falls yesterday and I was there to announce the new casino site, which is going to be at the Maple Leaf Village site in downtown Niagara Falls.

Mr Wildman: Point of order: This should have been a ministerial statement.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): There's nothing out of order.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I can see that the members on the opposite side don't like to hear good news, because this is a very good-news piece of information. This is going to have a major economic benefit in the Niagara Falls region and for Ontario as a whole. I'm very happy about the site. The board of directors of the Ontario Casino Corp are convinced that it's a very good site, an economic site, and extremely well located.

I'm also happy to report that a temporary operator for the site will be selected in the near future and that the process for choosing a long-term operator for the site will be commenced in the next six months.

Mr Froese: The minister mentioned the economic benefit to the city of Niagara Falls. I would like to ask the minister if he could estimate what that benefit would be to the city of Niagara Falls, and indeed the city of St Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake, the region as a whole, and the province. How many jobs would you expect could be created by this project?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm very happy to report that the number of jobs which will benefit directly the city of Niagara Falls is 3,000, for the region is 6,000—that's 10 times what you said—and 9,000 for the province of Ontario in total. Also, there will be about 500 to 600 construction jobs, which I think is very commendable, and this will be a very huge project in terms of economic development.

The interim casino will generate approximately \$650 million in revenues, of which \$375 million will pertain to our share in this province. I think this is very good news for the city, it's very good news for your region and it's very good news for the province.

1440

NUISANCE COMPLAINTS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, I'm concerned as to the impact that the gutting and destroying of your ministry is going to have on industrialized communities such as Hamilton-Wentworth and others across Ontario that rely heavily on heavy industry. You've reduced your staff by 750 positions, according to your own documents. You're reducing analytical testing for environmental compliance and enforcement as well, virtually eliminating responses to complaints of occurrences regarding noise, dust and odour. They are regarded as nuisance complaints. You're also shifting responsibility for monitoring environmental emissions and controls to

the industries themselves, which in effect is like giving a drug addict the key to the medicine cabinet at the local pharmacy.

When I look at my own constituency of Hamilton and the beach strip and the industrial core, they've suffered enough without your ministry now reducing responses to complaints. Why are you reducing these responses to complaints of noise, dust and odour, and how will people living in industrial cores across this province and in my riding benefit from your move to also have industries self-regulate the emissions?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the member opposite for the question. We in the Ministry of Environment and Energy are focusing our attention and our resources on supporting the core businesses in the protection of the air, water and soil in this province.

It is true that we are going to ask our partners in the municipalities to help us with the ongoing problems of noise, odour and dust. Very often these are problems that arise from planning issues within local municipalities, and we are going to ask for their help to monitor those and deal with the situations as they arise.

Mr Agostino: In 1995, your ministry received 7,133 complaints of noise, odour and dust across this province, and of those, over 10%—805 complaints—came from Hamilton-Wentworth. Minister, you've put these down in your documents as nuisance. I would hardly dismiss someone waking up with two inches of black dust on the front of their home, on their doors or on their cars as a nuisance. I would hardly dismiss people having to keep their doors and windows locked day and night because of odour—and your ministry will not be there to respond to the complaints—as nuisance complaints, as you do. Maybe you should spend a night at a home on the beach strip in my community to see if this is a nuisance.

How can you suggest that municipalities which you have now cut by over 40% are going to be able to do the job and have the staffing and the resources to respond to over 7,000 complaints last year, which you're not going to respond to this year? How do you justify that, and what do you tell municipalities that can't afford and don't have the staff to carry this out?

Hon Mrs Elliott: The ministry will be tough on polluters. It is our job to set standards, to set rules for the province of Ontario. We still have a significant and very worthwhile and strong compliance office and enforcement office.

I think it is important that we distinguish between what is a nuisance and what is a real environmental issue. If citizens in my honourable colleague's constituency wake up with two inches of something on their cars, that is an environmental issue and it is one to which my staff will pay attention and will deal with.

Businesses in the province of Ontario operate within the certificates of approval and must operate within the rules, within the standards that are set. It is our job to set them and make sure they are met.

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Madam Minister, you and your cabinet colleagues have moved swiftly to eliminate the access to trades and professions demonstration fund and have moved swiftly to eliminate the Anti-Racism Secretariat and the anti-racism grants. Before the election, your Premier and yourselves said that a Harris government is committed to combating systemic racism through education and vigorous efforts to change attitudes. In light of your cuts, can you explain what your promise means?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): In response to the member for Fort York's question, as he knows, in December we announced a plan to deal effectively with equality of opportunity for all Ontarians; that was called the equal opportunity plan.

Clearly there are some initiatives within the equal opportunity plan that will identify the barriers that do exist for some Ontarians. We intend to tear down those barriers. We did not feel that the employment equity law, the quota law, was the law to tear down those barriers; indeed we felt that the quota law put up barriers. By eliminating the quota law, that was the biggest barrier to Ontarians for equal opportunity that there was. Implementation of the equal opportunity plan will indeed create much more opportunity than the previous government created.

Mr Marchese: We've talked to a number of agencies serving immigrants, and they communicate to us a very great sense of powerlessness and hopelessness as you bring about your cuts. You've cut Ontario's settlement and integration programs by 20%. The agencies are telling us that this cut will mean the end to many programs serving immigrants and front-line services. In fact, in your Premier's own riding, the North Bay Immigrant Support Service had to close its doors last week.

Your government, through Mr Harris, said that a Harris government will develop a comprehensive immigration strategy to address the fact that Ontario's settlement and integration facilities are overburdened, especially in the greater Toronto area. In light of your cuts, what does that promise mean?

Hon Ms Mushinski: First of all, I think I should correct the record in that the allocation to the Ontario settlement and integration program was not 20%, as has been suggested by the member for Fort York, but will be reduced by a total of 13.2% over the next two years.

Support for community-based delivery of immigrant settlement services is a core business of this ministry. We have maintained a significant allocation of \$5.1 million for these services, recognizing the economic, social and cultural contribution of newcomers to the province.

PETITIONS

FAMILY SUPPORT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we believe that the family support plan is a viable and necessary service provided by the government of Ontario,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the proposed centralization of the family support plan will have a negative impact on the children who are supported under this plan and should be cancelled."

Because I agree with this, I sign my name to it.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This is signed by 15 residents of eastern Ontario, and I have affixed my signature as well.

1450

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): It's my pleasure today to present to the Parliament of Ontario a petition with approximately 1,000 names.

"Whereas the present Condominium Act of Ontario does not give the condominium corporations the legal right to limit the number of people who occupy each unit in the complex, thus causing overcrowding situations in many buildings; and

"Whereas the overcrowding creates excessive demand on services and facilities of the condominiums, leading to tensions, violence, fire and health problems, increased maintenance expenses and depreciation of values;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We strongly recommend that the Condominium Act of Ontario be amended to give condominium corporations, through their own rules and regulations, the legal right to limit the number of persons per unit and right of entry to ensure adherence to the rules.

"The rights of condominium owners and taxpayers must be considered and supported in order to alleviate the inequitable situation."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee

has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

RENT REGULATION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition signed by the tenants at 1140 Ramsey View Court in Sudbury, Ontario, and I'd like to thank Evelyn LaBelle for sending it to me. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution; and

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with a high tenant population campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system; and

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants of Ontario; and

"Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I have affixed my signature to it, and I agree with the petitioners entirely.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I have a petition signed by a number of constituents in my riding of Bruce. It appears to be in standard form, and I present it on behalf of those who have signed. The petition to the Ontario Legislature reads:

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

I affix my name to it.

PRIVATIZATION OF LCBO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by a number of residents of Ontario, as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving toward the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I am in agreement with its contents.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions from the United Food and Commercial Workers in addition to the few thousand that I've already presented. They come over the signature of Dan Gilbert, who's the president, and the petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and Premier Harris:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits, excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, multiple injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational disease; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT, including eliminating worker representation on the board; and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"We therefore demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeals structure with worker representation, that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Bill Grimmatt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a series of petitions provided to me by constituents of the riding of Parry Sound. These petitions relate to the spring bear hunt, and there are approximately 491 signatures. They appear to be in the proper form.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition that was organized by Kathy Leger, a registered nurse at St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton, with the help of many of the women who work in the labour and delivery department at St Joseph's, in regard to the closure recommendation. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force related to any hospital closures in Hamilton-Wentworth, in particular St Joseph's Hospital, 50 Charlton Avenue East in Hamilton."

I add my name to this, along with 3,000 other individuals who have signed these petitions.

PENSION FUNDS

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): I have a petition that's been delivered to me through the Honourable Henry N.R. Jackman's office in regard to some documents signed by some constituents of mine. I'm not an expert on parliamentary procedure, Mr Speaker, but I suspect that this petition is not in order and I'll have it tabled for that consideration.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I have a petition signed by a number of concerned citizens in my riding.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Stop the cuts to Ontario's poor. The government of Ontario is planning to implement tax cuts that would benefit well-off people while at the same time they have cut income to the poor, and 46% of Ontario families make less than \$35,000 a year but will get 7.3% of the benefits of the provincial tax cut (or about \$462). Families with total incomes over \$95,000 a year make up only 9.2% of all Ontario families, but they will get 32.7% of the benefits. In these tough times it is unconscionable that the poor will go hungry while the wealthy are given more."

It is signed by a number of residents, and I also add my signature to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document; and

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system; and

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants of Ontario; and

"Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished; and

"Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I add my signature, Mr Speaker.

1500

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition from residents of Kent county, 330 names in total.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth, as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and, operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals; and

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas the principles of discipline, self-help and regimented environment at Transition House have combined with counselling and support to provide youth with the motivation and self-respect to return to school or find jobs; and

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on the statistics of children and youth in crisis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and places the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

I affix my name to this petition.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature, the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of this efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of the St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I add my signature.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): I have today a very important petition signed by some 3,400 people.

"Whereas there is less than 1% of old-growth red and white pine remaining in Ontario; and

"Whereas the policy for the protection of Ontario old-growth forests, as recommended by the Old Growth Policy Advisory Committee, has not been adopted; and

"Whereas the logging of the Algoma highlands is destroying Ontario's largest stands of unlogged old-growth white pine forests; and

"Whereas the Temagami Comprehensive Planning Council has proposed that 77% of Temagami's old-growth red and white pine forests be allocated for logging and mining and only 7.5% have been identified as potential protected areas; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government has promised to complete, within its first six months, an action plan for the designation of a province-wide network of ecologically representative protected areas;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect Ontario's remaining old-growth forests by implementing their campaign promise to establish a province-wide network of protected areas, including the Algoma highlands and Temagami."

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 1996
LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 1996

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996 / Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 1996.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Orders of the day.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): The Supply Act, 1996, Mr Speaker. It is my understanding that we have unanimous consent to deal with all stages of the bill at this time.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Eves moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996 / Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 1996.

The Speaker: Does the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Eves moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996 / Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 1996.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for Interim Supply for the period commencing May 1, 1996, and ending October 31, 1996.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I understand that there's agreement that a vote shall take place at 6 o'clock today.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Hamilton Centre had the floor when we last adjourned.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to finish the few remaining minutes that I have in my time to debate this particular motion.

I had left off yesterday just beginning to talk about a couple of matters that concerned me that I found in the section regarding the responsibilities of the Solicitor General and the Minister of Correctional Services. I've already spoken to the issue of the Coroners Act being opened to deny workers a guaranteed inquest whenever there is a death at a construction site or at a mining location, and I had just begun to talk about the fact that in this plan we see the Coroners' Council will be eliminated. Again as I mentioned yesterday, in and of itself this is not an earth-shattering event, but it is indicative of the approach that this government has to the needs of the public. The Coroners' Council is not a well-known body, but they have performed and up until the time it's eliminated will perform an important service to the people of Ontario.

I reviewed the legislation yesterday when I returned to my office after our discussion here in the House just to refresh my memory and indeed the Coroners' Council is there if there's a question of the competency or ability of coroners. It's there not to review specific cases but the actual competency, not unlike that with regard to judges where they have a great deal of responsibility, a great deal of important public matters are in their domain and there needs to be some check if we have problems. We're all human and things happen in this world and we always need to have in a democracy a check and balance on those institutions and individuals that we as citizens give voluntarily, through an election, the power to take care of for us. In this case, it's coroners who are appointed by the Solicitor General or on the advice of the Solicitor General to the cabinet of the day, and this government's eliminating it. They're doing that again just to save money, money that they're planning to give to their wealthy friends through the 30% tax cut; as we have said time and time again, over 60% of that tax cut will go to the top 10% income earners in Ontario.

1510

In doing so, we pull out yet one more piece of the things that make our province and our system and our society work. This government doesn't think things like this—worker health and safety, WCB, social assistance, a decent health care system, a decent education system—are important enough to find a way that allows us to gradually deal with the debt and deficit and yet preserve those institutions and those benefits and those hallmarks of what makes this a great province to live in. This government doesn't think that's as important as being able to give its wealthy friends this tax cut that's going to cost us \$5 billion.

More and more people in this province are beginning to accept and understand that the cuts being made are not the only alternative. As much as this government likes to leave the impression that the only way to deal with our fiscal problems is to slash and burn and hack at every value we ever had in this province, the reality is there's no need to take care of this tomorrow. This is still the strongest economy in this entire nation. This is still one of the strongest economies in the G-7. It's still the greatest place in the world to live.

It's obscene in my opinion that this government feels that in order to out-right-wing Ralph Klein and in order to find \$5 billion for its tax cut, it is prepared to systematically dismantle all the things that do indeed make this a great place to live. What's unfortunate is not that this will go on forever, because it won't—this is going to be a one-term wonder—what's unfortunate is the amount of damage that will be done by then and the number of people who will be needlessly hurt.

We will continue, as we have from the beginning of this government's mandate, to point out the damage and the harm and the pain this government is needlessly inflicting on the people of Ontario, and as we get closer to an election, of course we will begin to offer up an alternative plan or approach to governing in this province. I assure you that it will be one that tries to preserve and enhance our health care system, our infrastructure, our

education system, all the things that can make us competitive in a global economy, but in a way that preserves and strengthens this province.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to add my few words to this debate.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the people of Wellington to speak to the government's interim supply motion. In the time allotted to me, I'd like to review some of the accomplishments the government has achieved in recent months and also touch on a few issues which are of concern to my constituents in Wellington county.

In the past 10 months, the government has moved swiftly and decisively in many key areas: to restore competent administration to the province's finances; to address our financial problems, our debt and deficit crisis; to act on promises made to the people during last year's election campaign, in which the people of Ontario gave the Progressive Conservative Party a strong mandate to implement our proposed program.

More specifically, in the past 10 months, the government has:

Reduced runaway provincial spending dramatically, working to get our finances on a more sustainable footing.

Repealed Bill 40, the former government's changes to Ontario's labour law which discouraged job-creating investment and upset the delicate balance in labour relations in favour of the union leaders.

Initiated major reforms to the Workers' Compensation Board to stabilize premiums, improve its management, strengthen its books, while providing better service to injured workers in need.

Folded the Workplace Health and Safety Agency into the Workers' Compensation Board to return the responsibility of improving workplace safety to where it can yield the best results.

Established a red tape review committee with a mandate to eliminate all unnecessary government regulations which tie up business and diminish their job-creating potential.

Frozen the minimum wage to encourage the creation of entry-level jobs for our young people who haven't yet acquired many marketable job skills so that they can get that first job opportunity that they need and move on from there.

Acted to curb the abuse of our welfare system, to try to end the cycle of dependency and despair which traps so many people and help them to find the dignity and self-worth that meaningful employment implies.

Largely ended the corporate welfare program whereby private businesses were directly subsidized with taxpayers' money, distorting the free market and creating unfairness between Ontario companies which received assistance and, in too many cases, their Ontario competitors which did not.

Repealed the \$50 annual corporate filing fee and the filing fee for non-profit corporations, which became a lightning rod for small business people's and charities' complaints about the provincial government.

Restored long-term stability and predictability to Ontario Hydro rates.

Ended the possibility of reverse discrimination which existed in the former government's so-called "employment equity" law, ensuring that hiring and promotions will be based on qualifications and merit.

All these policy changes have been made with one overriding objective: The creation of new jobs in Ontario, the central theme of our government.

On behalf of the people of Wellington, I want to thank the members of the executive council for their hard work in recent months and the dedication they've shown to implement these steps, our caucus, our political staff and the Ontario public service, all of us working together to improve the economic climate in Ontario.

I should also like to thank the people of Wellington, because all of the policy changes that I've outlined this afternoon had their origins in this document, the report of the Mike Harris Task Force on Creating Jobs Through Small Business, which we released in opposition in January 1995. Almost half of the consultation meetings which led to this report took place in Wellington county.

I mentioned earlier the Ontario public service and I'd like to now return to that area. I want to commend the chairman of the Management Board of Cabinet. He's doing an excellent job in challenging times.

While I recognize that the steps the government announced last Thursday to reduce the civil service are necessary because of our financial problem, I take no pleasure from these decisions. In fact, I wish they hadn't been necessary. I wish that past governments of all three parties hadn't spent so recklessly, hadn't spent beyond the needs of the people to pay, hadn't spent in areas which were unnecessary and unsustainable. They spent more than they took in, they borrowed the difference and we're paying today for that profligacy.

I realize that Thursday's announcement is intended to be a positive step in the long-term recovery for Ontario, but it's hardly good news to anyone employed in the civil service. Look at this from their perspective on a human level. You apply for a job with the Ontario government. You're hired. You're assigned certain tasks. You do them. You serve the people of Ontario and every two weeks you get a paycheque. You feed and clothe and shelter your family. You're a public servant. It's not your fault that the government faces a crisis and must take difficult decisions to resolve it, yet you are now facing the uncertainty of looming layoff notices which will come in the next two years.

Again, I support the cutbacks announced last Thursday but I'm sorry they must happen. It's incumbent upon the government to ensure that everyone who leaves the employ of the province be treated fairly and with compassion—a quality every government should exhibit and a quality the opposition says the present government lacks. We are uncaring, we are mean-spirited, we are cold-hearted, they say. I do not accept this criticism. It is inaccurate and it is unjust. Any government which is lacking compassion, is uncaring, is motivated by spite, by settling old scores, any government which acts in that way doesn't deserve the public's trust and clearly does not deserve a second mandate.

As the member for Wellington and as a resident of Ontario, I do not hate government. I recognize it as being

necessary to provide essential services in a fair manner, available to everybody, regardless of their wealth or social standing, services which would not be provided generally and fairly to everybody if we left things entirely to the private sector. We need government; that is a given.

1520

It is one of the ironies of life, I suppose, that it has fallen to the Conservative Party of Ontario, the party which, of the three represented in this House, believes that less government is best, to be compelled, because of the financial crisis and the debt crisis, to take the steps necessary to save government in Ontario.

And save government we must. We must save the provincial government for Lauren and Shannon Kollee. Lauren and Shannon are eight-year-old identical twin girls who live with their family in Elora in Wellington county. I've met them. They're delightful, beautiful children, and they're special in that they have a medical condition called congenital central hypoventilation syndrome, which means they lack the impulse to breathe normally while they're sleeping, so they need to wear breathing masks hooked up to respirators during the night. Lauren and Shannon need the assistive devices program to help with the cost of their respirators so that they can breathe while they sleep. We must save the provincial government for Lauren and Shannon.

We must save the provincial government to help small rural municipalities which may lack the tax base to finance basic infrastructure needs. For Pilkington township in Wellington county, it's the replacement of their bridges 14 and 15, the township's only structures spanning the Grand River. For Maryborough township in the hamlet of Moorefield, it's a communal water and sewage system that's needed to protect their local environment. I could go on and on, if time permitted.

We must save the provincial government for families, for seniors, for farmers, for students, for the sick and the infirm, for the needy—for everyone in Ontario.

In recent weeks the members opposite have brought up my name in relation to the tax cut and I want to respond to that. We'll hear more about the tax cut in the coming budget. I'd like to comment on this for the public record because, as many members of this House may be aware, I've been less enthusiastic perhaps than some members of this House about the need for a major tax cut at this time.

Let me say this: I'd like to see a tax cut as much as anybody. I know that more money in people's pockets means more hope, more confidence and a greater likelihood that people will spend. I know all that. I also understand the politics of a tax cut, which is appealing on the surface, especially if one overlooks the detailed facts of the provincial debt, which presently stands at about \$100 billion, I need not remind members, growing at \$1 million an hour, rising to at least \$120 billion when our mandate is complete when this Parliament is dissolved.

The people of Wellington expect the tax cut to take place only if it is affordable, possible and responsible, and they also expect the government to keep its word.

I accept the fact that a majority in this House support a tax cut, that they believe its obvious benefits will eventually outweigh its equally obvious disadvantages,

and I accept that the will of the majority will prevail. I hope the benefits of a tax cut will be realized and the economic forecast that the tax cut idea is based upon will prove over time to be in the best interests of all the people of the province we are so privileged to serve.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): It's a great opportunity to speak on interim supply, these funds or moneys the government needs to carry on its business. It's rather surprising that after 10 months in government—a responsible government, as it has tried to project itself—it has not brought forward a budget. I would have thought this fiscally responsible government would have had as its first thing to put forward a budget to tell us in what direction it would like to go.

As I know the Conservative members are anxious to come and support the kinds of things I am saying and doing, I invite them all to come and sit behind me, because that would indicate their support of the things they should be doing. I'd be glad to offer my recommendation that they listen, considering that they are not a government that has any consultation with the people.

How I see that a government should behave is that the role of a government in Parliament is to be representative. This is a large province, a very diverse province of rural, urban, different ethnic groups, different religious groups, and it must be representative within the House, that when we have policies and any kind of spending it reflect the wishes and the aspirations of the people.

It must also be responsible to all those people, even those who were not supportive of the Conservative Party, and it must be accountable. In 10 months, the indication is that this party, this government, has failed on all three levels. They have not been representative to all the people of Ontario, they've not been responsible in the way they have conducted themselves, and they've not been accountable.

They were elected in June 1995, as you know, Mr Speaker. I'd like to review some of the things that have happened over the past.

Overall, they have been very effective in destroying confidence in the people. The people have lost their confidence in this government, a government that "cares." No, they don't feel they care. Their first decision when they came into power was to take away from the weakest of our society, the most vulnerable, that basic support they had and told them they should go out and fend for themselves. They cut the welfare recipients' income in such a drastic form that today the repercussion is that those who are unable to pay for their rent and buy food have been scrambling around.

The ministers here don't seem to represent their constituencies, which they should be doing. Take, for instance, the Minister of Community and Social Services. One of his first remarks in the House was to tell someone that if they have no money for food, go to the stores and try to barter and find out if they can reduce the cost of food, that that's the way people should be doing it. That's the kind of government we have, a government with no compassion whatsoever.

We've seen the disabled confused about whether they are being supported, and some of their supports have been taken away from them. This government continues to feel it is here for those kinds of people.

The people in my constituency of Scarborough North feel so intimidated by what's happening. They're intimidated because they feel the government will take away rent control, has reduced the welfare supplement they had, has taken away jobs. They're very frightened about the direction in which this government is going, all for the sake, they say, to reduce the deficit.

In the short time I have, I'd like to focus on three areas. I want to talk a bit about housing and the policy of this government, and within that, rent control; I want to talk about education, especially where it has impact on our young people, on our youth, and about youth employment; and I want to talk about the human rights cuts that have been happening.

Let me first talk about the Human Rights Commission and the human rights cuts there. The minister comes into this House, has made no statement in regard to how those people who have been subjected to all types of human rights abuses and the backlog that exists there—how it's going to be addressed. This is the government who, first, when they came in decided to cancel the employment equity legislation, which was brought in by the New Democratic Party at the time. Like all governments when they come in, they put their own brand on in protecting all. When they did that, they first took away over \$700,000 from the budget, having recognized the fact that there will be needs for which to have more support for the Human Rights Commission because of the huge backlog we have there.

1530

In the meantime, they had stated that in the cancellation of the employment equity department, that money would be transferred to Human Rights. That has not been done. Today, people are still waiting three and four years for abuses done to them to be addressed, while this government said it would address that concern. This has not been done.

I am extremely concerned by the way the minister approached that issue, as if these people are at fault because they were sexually abused or abused in racial slurs or hate crimes, and how that's been addressed. That has not been done, and they have no hope. They have given up any hope whatsoever for this government to address those concerns.

As a matter of fact, the Premier and his colleagues, most of the ministers, I would say, would call these people special-interest groups and therefore dismiss them. I don't see anything wrong with someone having a special interest in a government or in their concerns. But they have given up hope; they've given up hope that justice and any human rights cause could be addressed under this government.

I don't feel that within the coming years this government will be in power anything sensible will be done in that regard, because they see that as part of balancing their budget, to save money on the backs of the poor, on the backs of the most vulnerable, all for the sake of saying, "The deficit will be reduced and see if we can save in that respect." I think that's awful.

When I look at education and the Minister of Education, who I've known for a long time and respected, I know from his heart that what he is doing has been

directed by the spin doctors in his ministry and in the Premier's office. He knows how important education and training are to young people. He also knows that without a good education, without good training, one cannot afford oneself a proper job. But that doesn't worry this minister. It doesn't worry the minister at all that the high unemployment rate of young people is there and is not being addressed. So they've brought in a program that they say is for young people, a summer program that I don't think will ever touch the seriousness of this problem.

They have started to erode the possibility of people getting a good education by increasing tuition fees—it started off, as a matter of fact, with the NDP government when it cancelled out the OSAP grant portion of people having access to higher education—and also moving the people on welfare who are at school, transferring that into an OSAP loan.

I know young people who have just finished university or college, 22 or 23 years old, and they have a debt of \$20,000 or \$25,000. They haven't worked yet, but they've got a \$25,000 debt on their head and haven't been able to get a job. They're willing to work. In the meantime, of course, the banks start to calculate the interest rates immediately. So by the time they get around to even getting a job, maybe in a year or two, that may have gone to \$22,000 if it's \$20,000; if it's \$24,000, it may have gone to \$26,000 within that time, having a debt on their head without a job.

This government comes around and would like to make some makeshift work in the summer to believe that it's doing something for the young people, for the people who are unemployed. These are not jobs that are meaningful. These jobs are makeshift jobs that give people no will and purpose in what they are doing. They don't feel a part of it.

Let me explain to you and share with you some of the things I've been doing in my constituency of Scarborough North and beyond. I have visited many, many schools, quite often on Fridays, to speak to the students and to the teachers, and I've never seen in my time here, in visiting these schools over the last 11 years, such fear, such desperation in the young people, who see themselves not able to participate in society later on for jobs. Their education is being destroyed; that's how they feel. They don't feel a part of this at all.

They ask me the question: "Why is the government not listening? Why don't we see them speaking on our behalf, saying our education concerns them?" All they hear is about the deficit they have to reduce, the cost of their education, the cost of their parents who will not be working because there are no jobs. They're concerned.

I would challenge all the members in this Parliament to visit the schools and talk to those kids, talk to those young people and ask them if they feel, in the next 10 years' time, they will be working, will have a job that is worthwhile and be able to contribute to our society. They don't feel that way.

The teachers feel rather desperate. All they can hear at times is that we're going to privatize education. Sometimes we have those kinds of spins going on. "We're going to privatize education," and you know when the

private sector takes over education what will happen: They will immediately choose what is education. They may take away some of the soft subjects. They will say: "What's the use of having geography, psychology? We don't need them. What's the use of telling you how to think? We don't want you to think."

Government plays an extremely important role in education, and it seems to me this government is more interested in having the private sector run it. I don't blame the private sector. If they're going to pay for it, they're going to want to get the biggest buck for their money in the sense that they want the person to do the things they want to do, just to train them in that narrow gap.

I would encourage you all that what is happening now is not happening to somebody else's child, it's happening to your child, it's happening to your pension, it's happening to your future, to all parliamentarians in this House and all parents and all senior citizens.

It's the young people who will carry on this economy long after you have destroyed it and ignored our young people. I urge you, in our education programs, to make sure what you're doing is in the interests of our young people and of our province.

I'd like to speak a little bit about housing. Housing is pretty close to my heart and the way we've been handling this over a couple of years and in the 11 years I've been here.

I know the only way we will have affordable housing for those at an income level in the region of \$30,000, \$35,000 or so, which is a very low income level, is if the government builds it on a non-profit basis. That's the only way. If you don't believe me—which I know you do, Mr Speaker, but your other colleagues may be shaking their heads about this—the private sector will be happy to build any kind of housing possible if they can make a profit.

If I was the private sector and I was using my money to build housing and I couldn't make a profit, I would not be building it. I don't have that kind of money. I don't see any private sector having that kind of money to just build affordable housing without any profit. So the government has to play a very important role in making sure that we have affordable housing.

1540

I still can't understand why the government came in and cancelled about 385 projects across this province for people to have access to affordable housing, hoping that the private sector would build it at no profit. You can ask many of my colleagues who have been involved in housing. If you take some time off and understand it a bit more, you'll realize that this will not happen under the private sector.

The private sector is quite concerned about rent control. My party and my leader are committed to rent control, and we feel it should be there. It's important, for a product which people buy, that we have enough supplies of housing in the reach of people, but recognizing the fact that if the private sector is building it, there is a profit for the private sector too.

There's nothing wrong with profit, but this exorbitant profit that may come about at the expense of those who

can't have access to affordable housing is disastrous for young people, disastrous for families that have to be living in a decent and affordable environment. This will not happen under the private sector.

I know right now that many of the private sector landlords are meeting with the minister to develop the strategy to get rid of rent control.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): The way they met with you when you were minister.

Mr Curling: The member for Mississauga South asked where I was.

Mrs Marland: No, I said, "The way they met with you when you were minister."

Mr Curling: The thing is that we, together with the NDP at the time, put together a rent control policy. It was on its way to bringing about a fair return and access to affordable housing through our rent control or our rent review policy. It was working. It needed, of course, improvement, and that in itself would continue to improve in the rent review process.

This government came in and cancelled that immediately, intent to cancel the rent control, and said there should not be any rent control, and not only that; making room for the private sector to say, "We will cancel out all the non-profit social housing." Beyond that, they want to sell off all the units they have to the private sector. I hope when they do that, which they intend to do, that consultation will take place with the tenants there to give them the first shot at buying their home. I hope too that when they hand these units over to be bought by the private sector, which may be the tenants, they can fix them to a standard in which it is decent and affordable to live and to buy.

We know that the government has been a very poor landlord, poor in the sense of maintenance because it did not maintain its property as well. Don't blame the tenants in there, don't blame the tenants at all, because the fact is that the landlord, which is the government, which alone has about 84,000 units, has not kept its buildings in such a standard that one would be very happy and proud to live in.

I encourage that we do not destroy the non-profit and co-op housing, which has served very well in this province; they have not done so. I would appeal to the tenants out there, don't allow this government to bully you in the way they have done, because when they were campaigning in the election, many who are here today were saying they would not cancel rent control. They said when they were attacked many times—the minister himself, Al Leach, during the election talked about protecting rent control, and as soon as he got in he changed his mind.

I saw many of the colleagues here who are from especially the urban areas, just because they wanted to be elected and realized that the tenants themselves were concerned about the destruction and the destroying of the rent control policies and legislation they had, promise that they would not destroy rent control, and today they are backsliding over this promise. That was then, but now things have all changed.

I'm telling you, and I'm appealing to the tenants out there, do not fear these kinds of bully tactics from them. I would say to them to be organized. Request these same

members who came knocking at your door in May and June 1995 to 'fess up and say the same things they were saying then. I'm telling you, they will not sit back and take the way you have pushed some of these bills through this House. They will not do that. Gone are the days that Ontario is very passive about things that the government of the day will do. They will make sure that you don't destroy their homes, because that's what you're doing, and I will be out there telling those tenants to make these people accountable.

I'd like to speak just a little bit about an attitude and the mean-spirited way this government has conducted itself in 10 months. I have a feeling that they are trying to drive fear into the people of Ontario. The people will stand up, although they'll have to wait very long, to throw you out of government if you continue to abuse that privilege which you got to govern in a very sensible and very compassionate way, but we don't see that. We see the smiles and the mean-spirited way in which you have cut people from jobs, the thousands of civil servants you have laid off with a smile—with a smile. How can you be so mean-spirited in the sense of folks who have to work and support their mortgages and pay rents and buy food and send their children to school, that you laugh as you fire them on the line?

As a matter of fact, during the strike, it was like they forced these workers to be on strike—forced them—and then settled in a way that could have been done without people going out on strike.

Today, if you're not aware of this, there are still people not getting paid who have been back on the job almost two weeks, and some people have been told they won't get paid for another three weeks. How do you expect the people to live? You are the government. Don't look at me. You are the government that has the bureaucrats there who can generate a cheque for people who have worked. Some people who were on contract haven't gotten paid for four or five months, and then you blame it on the strike. This government, which should represent all the people—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Since November?

Mr Curling: Since November. I can give you cases. The member asks if it's since November. Yes, since November, since December, there are some folks who have not gotten paid. They are saying, "Because of the strike, we're not able to generate cheques."

I think your government is trying to punish the people for that or trying to save money on the backs or those folks. I would say to you, my friend, that you are elected to represent all the people of this province and not to be so mean-spirited about your approach. The people have a right to proper representation regardless of whether they voted for you. The people in housing, who felt they would be able to pay affordable rent for their accommodation and not the legislation being taken away, leaving them with no protection. People who have been your tenants for years—you decide to sell their home from under them. That's bad, very bad. People who want to send their kids to school can't afford it. Welfare recipients in school today are being asked that the welfare cheques they are getting will be a loan now, so when you leave you'd have this massive loan on your head to pay.

The same government is saying, "We are trying to get people off that cycle of welfare into the workforce," and when people try to do that they are punished.

1550

What type of government are you? I appeal to you to listen to the people, to understand their cry. It's not partisan stuff. It's not, "I am poor, so therefore I am the enemy." It's not that I wouldn't like the tax cut too, but I don't want the lower end of the economic strata to be paying for your upper echelons in the economic strata. That's what's happening. You're trying to find all that money because you made a political promise to have a tax cut for those in the upper-income bracket.

You're asking for money now to spend again because you didn't have a budget—a very irresponsible way of conducting business. Of course, we are appalled that you have the gall to do that. We await your budget—as you say, late May—to see where you're going to take this province, because so far you've taken it in a way that people are extremely concerned. They see you not as a compassionate government, not as a government which represents all the people. I hope you can see your way as you try to govern—and it's new to you—to be more compassionate and more understanding about the issues that concern especially the most vulnerable in our society.

I appreciate the opportunity to make some of those comments, and I hope the members see fit to follow suit.

Mrs Marland: It's delightful to have the opportunity to respond to comments made by a former Minister of Housing, particularly in the area that the comments were made. I guess it's particularly interesting because, with respect, you were the former Minister of Housing; I was at one time your critic in opposition. I also was critic in housing for a number of other ministers. I also shared public platforms with the member for Lawrence who was the critic for housing when the New Democratic Party was the government.

Around all this issue of whether government should build housing, or private sector should build housing, swirls a whole lot of misinformation. I think it's very unfortunate when this happens because when people really look at the raw figures and the cost of what we're doing, what we are saying is that with all the previous two governments' policies we still had over a quarter of a million people on waiting lists in this province for affordable housing. So what you were doing and all your policies of rent review and rent protection—all of those different pieces of legislation that came in under various numbers and various bills never solved the problem. We still had huge retroactive rent increases for tenants in this province that they simply couldn't afford. We still had people who didn't have places to live.

What we are saying, and I say this respectfully to the former Minister of Housing, is what you did didn't work. What we are going to do will work and will solve those problems for tenants in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further questions or comments? The member for Scarborough North to sum up.

Mr Curling: The minister from Mississauga South—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Minister? She should be a minister.

Mr Curling: Yes, she should be a minister. I know she tried very hard. Consumer and commercial relations would be a role for you. Then you would have to deal with the rent control issue.

Your party seems to be a party of convenience. As a matter of fact, they are the ones who introduced rent control at one time. In her message it's like she didn't introduce rent control whatsoever—

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Listen to you, Alvin. You're out of control.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Curling: I know I rattled the cage of the right-wing member from Etobicoke there.

They introduced rent control in such a very haphazard way that it had to be improved. You must recall that it was you who introduced rent control, and we had to actually improve it. If you can tell me the private sector will build affordable housing by taking away rent control, if you can promise me that right now, that if we take away rent control, affordable housing will be built, I'll be delighted.

Mr Stockwell: Alvin, thank God there's no wind in here, or you'd be swinging.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke West, come to order.

Mr Curling: The member for Etobicoke West I know sometimes has his foot under his armpit and is not quite sure where it is.

The fact is that if they can be more sensible about it and promise me that by eliminating rent control the private sector will build affordable housing, then I will say, of course we will step back from all that. But I'm telling you we are committed and we will continue to struggle to organize those tenants who are most vulnerable under rent control—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member's time is up. Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I too am pleased to speak to the interim supply motion today. I am happy because I want an opportunity to be able to raise a number of points that I hope will resonate with the public as we raise these issues.

The Conservative members are drooling over the cost-saving measures they have introduced, the Interim Report on Business Planning and Cost Savings Measures. The government gloats, the private sector gloats over these cuts and Conservative economists gloat over these cuts.

Everyone is cutting. The federal Liberal government is cutting 40,000 workers. The provincial government is obviously cutting 11,000 workers. The private sector is cutting workers by the thousands as they make record profits. Municipal governments are forced to cut people because they're getting less from provincial governments. All the agencies connected to provincial governments, federal governments and municipal governments are also cutting, and these cuts, believe it or not, are hurting people. The image it gives to me in terms of what we're doing as a government is that we're throwing all of these people into a Roman forum as the lions circle around.

The government is saying, "We're doing more with less," and I don't know how they can do that. I don't know how you can do more with less, but we do hear

them constantly talking about doing more with less. Most people, whether they're professionals or non-professionals, understand that you don't do more with less. In fact when you get less money, you do less. What these cuts mean is that you're getting less service from government. That's what the cuts mean: less service with less money; not more with less, but quite the contrary.

1600

They talk about becoming more efficient and effective. I don't know how you do that by cutting the billions of dollars they're cutting. Some \$10 billion worth of cuts do not make for an efficient government. If you believe as the public that they're becoming more efficient by cutting \$10 billion, then God bless. But we don't believe you can become more efficient by doing that. If anything, you become more inefficient, more unable to do the work you've done before. If some of you listening today thought the government and its civil service may not have been serving you well, you can bet your life that with \$10 billion less you're going to get worse service than ever before.

They talk about streamlining. Streamlining means cuts and more cuts, and less service. They talk about giving you hope for the future and hope for the children. That's all you're getting. Hope doesn't seem to be feeding the poor; hope doesn't help women who are abused; hope doesn't deal with the violence in our society; hope doesn't deal with prevention. Hope gives us very little, and people are not going to be satisfied with the empty words of hope and that somehow that will take you a long way into the future, because it won't.

When you take \$10 billion out of provincial government and out of provincial circulation, you are causing a great deal of destruction. The effects of \$10 billion out of the market and out of circulation will have a profound effect on our social, psychological and human way of life that we've had for a long time. People tend not to relate cuts to the effects they have on people, so when the government drools and gloats about the cuts, it never seems to focus on what it means to the individual person who is all of a sudden gone from the workplace where they have been for 10, 15 or 20 years.

They underestimate the human effect it has on people, on families and their children, and on the economy. They underestimate completely how \$10 billion affects the economy in Ontario. You cannot take that much and not hurt the economy. The mood it creates is one of extreme fear, extreme angst, extreme insecurity and extreme powerlessness and hopelessness, and that's what I believe most people feel.

When we talk about the income tax cut this government wants to introduce, they again gloat over this as, "What a wonderful measure we are introducing and what a wonderful benefit it is to people." This government needs at all costs to keep its promise; it cannot break that. We know and the majority of people know they need to keep that promise. They will keep that promise at all costs, in spite of the hurt it's going to do. We have a difference of opinion. They say it's not going to hurt people and the economy and we say it's going to hurt people and the economy profoundly, because when you break it down, when you unpack what that income tax

cut means, it means the following: 60% per cent of all of the income tax cut goes to 10% of the people.

What that means is that we're not distributing that income tax cut evenly or equally to the bottom sector of our economy. The people at the bottom get the very least, even though we know the people at the bottom spend the very most because they need to; they have less. What you are in effect doing is giving the wealthiest citizens more money they don't need. Of course they gloat over that, of course they want the income tax cut, because they're going to get more back.

I don't know why you shake your head. If 60% of that money goes to the top 10 percentile of the population, it means the high-income earners are receiving it. That's what it means. I don't know why you might want to contradict that, but that's the effect of your income tax cut. It means we are not distributing the wealth to those who really need it, to those who really spend and would help the economy. You're doing the wrong thing.

Of course people yearn for a tax cut. I understand that. I understand that they want a tax cut, because for a long, long time, at least for the last 30 years, the middle-class income earners are shouldering more and more of the costs of our social spending on health, education and social services. And when they see them shouldering the problem, they say, "If this Conservative government is going to give us a break, we want it."

They don't know yet that the majority of people will receive very little at the end of the day. They don't know that yet. They will once you announce your budget in May and people have a good sense of who's going to get that income tax cut. They will know then that they will get very little and, disproportionately, the wealthy will get more. They will learn that, but it takes time for them to see it in their paycheque.

So they're yearning for a tax cut. The problem with that is that they're focusing on the wrong issue. They are not focusing on the fact that corporations are paying less than their share. In fact, in 1965 the corporations were paying 65% of the taxes and individuals were paying 35% of the taxes. We have completely reversed that situation, where individuals are now paying 65% of the taxes and the corporate sector is paying 23% of the taxes. That's why working people and middle-class people are shouldering the tax burden and want a tax break.

We should be focusing our attention on that sector of society that's not paying its fair share. That's why our corporate minimum tax was important. It was a beginning. By introducing that in Ontario for the very first time, we were able to raise \$125 million. It was an important beginning, but it was a recognition that we had to begin to distribute the tax burden more to the sector that's been paying less. If we don't do that, the tax burden will fall continually, eternally, on the poor, the working poor and the middle class that's fast diminishing, that's rapidly going down.

The middle class is going down, and it will continue to do so because of the firings. Your firings, municipal firings, agency firings, the private sector firings are going to create a permanent pool of unemployed that includes the middle class. Middle-class people will be perennially unemployed by your moves, by the federal moves, and by

the cuts that the municipal sector needs to do because of your provincial cuts. We are creating a society where we have the rich, the wealthier sector of the population, and a high proportion of poorly paid and of poor sector workers out there. That's what's happening. That's what you are creating.

It's important to speak to the public about this, not to speak to the government members, because we know they're resolute in their ideologically driven philosophy and policy. There's no point speaking to them. That is why we speak directly to the public.

Nothing in this government is sacred, nothing. We've seen that with their announcements of \$10 billion in cuts they have made in the laothing is sacred. We see that in spite of the promises this government has made, they have broken those promises. They said there will not be any cuts in educational funding. We know that was a lie, because they have cut in education, and the effect of the cuts by next year will be the equivalent of \$1 billion. They said they were not going to cut one penny out of the health budget, and we know that's not true.

The public needs to be discerning in the deception of the government, because when they promised no cuts and they cut, that is a deception. The public cannot be deceived by the promises the Conservative government has made.

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The reason I feel strongly about this is because this Conservative government, this Reform government, was going to be different. Remember, they were in power for 43 years. They know what governing means. When they made their promises over the last election that there would be no cuts to education, that there would be no cuts to health, you'd think they would be bound by those promises, but they're not. Those promises were hollow. They were going to be different; the Tories were going to be different; my friend Mr Stockwell was going to be different. They constantly railed against us for not keeping a promise. I understand from time to time governments will not keep their promises, but they were going to be different and we believed them. A large proportion of the public believed that you would keep all your promises, but we have to become masters of Tory deception.

Not one penny from the health care budget; \$1.3 billion has been cut. Not one penny from education; by next year \$1 billion out of education. It has dramatic effects on children in the educational system, on teachers, to take away \$1 billion. You can't take away \$1 billion without creating severe dislocation and derangement in the school system. The government says, "But 47% of that is non-educational." That is complete deception. Every dollar, every penny that is spent relates to the classroom, connects to the classroom teacher. Social workers connect to the classroom; educational assistants connect to the classroom; secretaries do the work of the school, of the principal, of the vice-principal and the teachers and they're connected to parents, they're connected to the teaching of the classroom, to the teacher, to the students, to the parents, to your taxpayers. It's all connected. You can't take so much out of those budgets and not affect the people they serve.

Social services are the ones that are not spared at all by this government. Social services are gutted completely, and you know whom that affects. It affects the poorest members of our society. It doesn't affect the wealthy. Your wealthy friends don't mind the cuts; your wealthy friends don't mind the user fees because they can afford them. It matters not to Tories, it matters not to Reformers because your friends, by and large, are not the working poor, are not the most marginalized members of society; they're corporate friends. They're your wealthy friends. Of course it doesn't matter to you, but you are affecting social society by distributing and redistributing the wealth that's out there to the wealthy from the poor.

When you send 11,000 workers away, when you take away their earning power, when your spending power is gone consumer confidence dwindles, and it's dwindling with fear. Confidence dwindles with fear when people know they're about to lose their jobs. They stop spending. Income tax that normally comes in because people are working is gone. The retail sales tax people that governments get because of their spending are gone when they cannot afford to spend. When you fire 11,000 workers, you are affecting the economy profoundly in the short term and the long term. You are dealing with a high number of part-time workers—not full-time workers—who cannot any longer afford to buy the things they could before. You're affecting consumer confidence and consumer spending.

You have poorly paid workers who are not receiving the wages they used to; you have a manufacturing sector that's dwindling, affecting the wages they used to get, so what you're affecting is government and you are hurting the people at the bottom when you do that. That's okay; it's okay for Reform governments, I understand that. The public, therefore, has to be the one that has to be discerning and has to understand our differences, yours and ours, and if at the end of the day they believe you and agree with you, then you've done a good job. Our job is to be able to say to the public: "This government is devastating our social life and is devastating our economy in Ontario. This is an Ontario-made recession by a Reform Party."

You are hurting small business as well; you, the party of business. You're hurting small business with these cuts and you will feel the effect of their anger as we go along. But that's okay; I'm sure you're confident about your cuts.

High interest rates are also hurting our economy. They're taking away billions of dollars from governments and ourselves. As banks lend our money that you invest in banks to governments, we're being gouged in a very complicated and profound way. Ninety per cent of our investments go to banks. They use our money to make money for those who invest privately in banks. They use our money to lend to provincial governments and federal governments at high interest rates, and then they gloat with the Conservative government when they cut. They're happy we're cutting. Using our money for high interest rates that we give to them to punish us, and they gloat with the cuts, they're happy with the cuts in social spending, as you are.

Those are your friends. That's where the hurt is. You are cutting where it hurts most. You're not going after

the sector that has the money. Oh no, you can't do that, that would be hurtful to you and your connections. So who do we go after? We go after the victims. People are yearning for victims and this government is willing to oblige them. As you look for victims, we need to find issues for those victims. Who are they? We say: "Welfare, there's the culprit. That's why our economy is being drained, because of the welfare cheats. Not because the corporate sector isn't paying its fair share any more. Not because interest rates are very high. Not because those who are very wealthy are not paying. No. We need a victim and the victim is the welfare recipient. So we Reform Party-minded people will oblige the public. We're going to cut their rates, we're going to make them work."

So we cut their rates by 22%. Conveniently, we find a good victim, someone that everybody can relate to and against.

We find another issue, employment equity. "The reason you don't have a job is because black men and women are taking away your jobs. So we're going to get rid of employment equity because that's what's taking away your job. Women are taking away your job, aboriginal people are taking away your job, and people with disabilities are taking away your job. We, the Reform-minded government, are going to take that employment equity away so jobs will be created."

We have found another scapegoat in society, another victim to go after, all to service your ends, your political end.

Your income tax cut does the very same thing. It gives wealth back to wealthy individuals, but at what cost? At a very high cost, because it will hurt those who are at the bottom.

If the public out there is listening to what we are saying, and if they relate to what we're saying, they need to call Mike Harris, they need to call every one of those individual members of the Reform Party over there on the other side and let them know what they're feeling. They need to understand, they need to know what you're feeling and how you are being hurt, because if you don't do that, there is damage that is being done now and the damage is going to increase as we go along.

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Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Thank you for the opportunity to add some thoughts on this important debate on interim supply which affects all Ontarians.

First, let me take this opportunity to welcome all members of the opposition to the new reality in Ontario, the new reality where government keeps its promises, strives to deliver more for less, and gets government off the backs of hardworking, ordinary citizens by giving them the freedom and opportunity to chart their own destinies, their own economic destinies.

If I sound buoyant today, I am. I'm energized by the prospects of building a modern government capable of meeting the needs of the 21st century by becoming more of a solution to its population and to its citizens than a problem.

But this is not change for change's sake. These measures, however drastic, as termed by those in the opposition benches, save us from the devastating debate

between the levels of service we want to offer the people of this province and eliminating those services altogether because we can no longer afford them.

If the members opposite haven't received the message loud and clear, let me deliver it once again: The interest we pay on servicing the debt is debilitating today and totally unsustainable tomorrow. The only way to ensure the programs we all value so highly are there for future generations is to make sure they are affordable and delivered as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

In the debate over this bill, it is appropriate to return to the government's five-point job creation plan. Modernizing government will result in a more accountable and creative government that spends taxpayers' dollars wisely. Lowering taxes, getting government spending under control, removing barriers to economic growth, reducing bureaucracy and balancing the budget are our five important job creation pillars, all of which affect the government's ability to spend.

Let me use some of my time in this debate to remind the House about some of the progress we have made and will make in these areas.

We were serious about balancing the budget from the day we got elected. It started with the finance minister's announcement in July, and was followed by the November economic statement where the government made difficult decisions to cut up to \$6 billion in spending to prepare for the 1996-97 fiscal year and move towards a balanced budget by the year 2000-01.

Removing barriers to growth, jobs and investment have begun to be realized through the following measures taken to date which were previously mentioned by my friend from Wellington. All are measures which point towards a positive climate for economic growth.

With respect to reducing government bureaucracy, we have committed to cutting administration by 33% over the next two years. Getting our spending under control must be achieved through good planning and good management, the vehicles we have chosen to get us there in this new process which examines ministry-by-ministry business plans. This process allows us to identify core businesses and focus our efforts where they are needed most. This will downsize administration, reduce waste and duplication and streamline and transfer services. This effort will provide all citizens with better-quality, lower-cost core services and activities.

Leadership and political courage are other factors that are necessary in getting this spending under control. I applaud all members of this House, especially the House leaders, for last week reaching the agreement necessary to reduce and freeze MPPs' salaries and benefit programs and eliminate the lavish pension scheme which was in place. This personal leadership on behalf of all government members will not alone solve our fiscal problems, but it is symbolic of the need for all to share in the responsibility of solving these problems.

The final pillar of our job creation plan is lowering the overall tax burden for the people of this province. We will eliminate the employer health tax from the first \$400,000 of payroll and deliver our plan to cut personal provincial income tax rates as promised in the Common Sense Revolution. It is the personal income tax cuts and

tax burdens generally on which I will focus the remainder of my remarks.

More than one study from around the world indicates with overwhelming evidence that the way in which government structures tax systems matters tremendously. In fact, the majority of economic scholarship in the area of government taxation supports the theory that a political jurisdiction can dramatically improve its economic benefit performance by lowering its overall tax burdens.

Further, statistical evidence as stated in a November 1995 article in the *Wall Street Journal* suggests that the type of taxation a government pursues is significant, and I quote, "There is a striking negative relationship between income tax burdens and income growth." Yet the provincial wizards of the past 10 years chose to raise taxes 65 separate times, including no less than 11 personal income tax increases.

The tax policies of the last 10 years saw the increased intrusion of government spending push up the level of public debt and make the economy extremely vulnerable to high interest rates. Further, this increased government intrusion, and rising taxes left the private sector ill equipped to deal with strong international competition. The facts are that between 1989 and 1994, Ontario's economy performed worse than that of the rest of Canada and the US in both gross domestic product and employment.

Over the 40-year period up until 1995, Ontario's real GDP grew at an average rate of 4.5%. That's the good news. The bad news is that during the 1990s Ontario's real growth rate was 0.7%. Total employment fell 1.5% in Ontario, while at the same time it rose 3.7% in the rest of Canada and 5.7% in the United States. That's when Bob Rae became Buffalo's man of the year.

What caused these negative impacts on the economy? The linkages between taxation and growth are hard to ignore. Notes from a US joint economic committee report dated October 1993 identified state tax policies as a critical factor missing from conventional analysis of why some states have been growing in the 1990s and others have not. Examining the evidence for the period of 1989 to 1993, the report compared job creation, growth and per capita growth incomes in the 10 states that raised taxes the most over the period 1990 to 1993 with the 10 states that cut or avoided raising taxes.

The results are hardly surprising. The tax-avoiding states created 653,000 new jobs over the period, versus just 3,000 new jobs for the tax-increasing states. Yet the tax-increasing states had much larger populations. Income for an average family of four dropped by an average of almost \$500 in the states increasing taxes but rose by \$300 per family of four over that same time frame in the tax-avoiding states. The 10 income-tax-increasing states lost nearly 200,000 jobs from 1989 to 1993; however, the 10 income-tax-cutting states created nearly one million new jobs over that same time frame.

In the early 1990s, states have used two contrasting strategies to deal with their fiscal crises. California, Connecticut, New Jersey and several others chose the option of attempting to close budget shortfalls through substantial tax hikes. The study confirms that not only have these states harmed their economies as a conse-

quence, but even with record new taxes they have failed to solve their budget deficit problems. Sounds familiar. Meanwhile, states such as Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana opted for budget restraints or no new taxes. These states tend to be in solid financial and fiscal shape today.

The main conclusion of this study was that virtually every state that is experiencing economic difficulty today enacted a major tax increase in 1990, 1991 or 1992. There's a principality familiar to all of us that increased taxes in all three of those years.

I am fully aware that one such study does not hold true for every case, but many studies in jurisdictions around the world, including ours, give us the one cold economic reality which rings true for all, this being that high overall tax burdens and marginal tax rates destroy jobs, destroy income, destroy wealth and destroy growth.

Why then would previous administrations follow failed tax and spending policies? One answer is that governments receive powerful motivation via very vocal interest groups to increase taxes. Previous administrations responded to these pressures by increasing taxes 65 times. They did not need to worry about these increases due to the lagging negative effects of tax increases on the economic viability of this region.

Dr Richard K. Vedder, professor and author of many government taxation policy studies, states: "If the negative effects of economic performance of tax increases were felt immediately, it would raise the political costs to politicians enacting those increases. In fact, it takes time for much of the adverse economic effects to be felt."

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It is easier now for me to understand why the administrations of the last 10 years pursued jellyfish policies like tax increases to get away with the lavish spending on programs and services. But maybe I give them too much credit. It is my deep-felt belief that if the two previous governments understood the horrendous human impact of their policies, they would not with good conscience have been able to auction off to the highest foreign creditor the future economic health of this great province. Whether they knew what they were doing or not is another debate for another time. What is evident is that their reckless mismanagement and misunderstanding of the basic economic principles have finally caught up with the people of the province. We have chosen a different path and a more courageous path.

I quote from one of Dr Vedder's conclusions:

"It often takes political courage to do what is right. The political benefits of spending are often obvious, whereas the potential economic costs are hidden, and thus an ineffective deterrent to good public policy. Educating the public as to the long-term consequences of high taxes is thus an important role for political leaders and responsible academics."

We have done our homework. Ontario must once again become the province of opportunity, the economic engine of Canada. Delivering an income tax cut to all of the hardworking people of this province is the right thing to do.

The Leader of the Opposition is very wrong in her assertion that this is a tax cut for the rich and the well-to-

do. This is a measure that will have a tremendously positive impact on all citizens in Ontario. The member from Thunder Bay has also consistently and conveniently forgotten to include this government's fair share health tax levy for those who earn significant incomes as part of the parcel of this government's effort to introduce fair and equitable taxation policies.

We will move forward with our economic agenda. Our five-point job creation plan will foster long-term economic growth and create jobs. All five points will build a strong Ontario where we can all once again look forward to our future with anticipation instead of anxiety.

We will do better for less.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): It's a pleasure for me to rise today on interim supply. Interim supply gives a member an opportunity to basically talk about just about anything he or she wishes, and today I want to focus the majority of my remarks on how the recent budget cuts, based on the Conservative government's business plans, have affected my riding of Timiskaming.

The riding of Timiskaming, which I represent, is a riding that has a southern border about 20 miles north of the Premier's, the town of North Bay. It goes for about 180 miles—and excuse me that I'm not speaking in metric in that—north up the Highway 11 corridor, through the towns of Martin River and Temagami, the Tri-town area of Cobalt and Haileybury and New Liskeard, through Englehart, a town I wish to speak about specifically later on in regard to the railway cuts there from the ONTC, and to the very famous gold-mining town of Kirkland Lake, which has seen some very hard times in the last few years but is actually on the verge of a new surge in gold-mining activity there.

Today I have brought a series of news clippings from some of the local papers that I subscribe to in the Timiskaming area that really highlight in the last couple of weeks some of the devastating blows that have occurred in the riding of Timiskaming as a result of these cuts.

The first I wish to speak to involves an agency of the Ontario government administered through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, and that is the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission that is centred in North Bay. It manages, owns and runs the ex-norOntair that was axed, unfortunately, last month by this government, which was a regional airline in northern Ontario that acted as a feeder airline into Air Ontario that fed into the Air Canada system in Toronto. But it also operates a ferry system, a bus system and a train system, and our train system is very important both for passenger and for freight traffic in our area.

Up until about a month ago, the town of Englehart was a centre for that operation north of North Bay. It was what they call a "maintenance-of-way" point along the railway, where trains were constructed and broken down into different component parts, depending on where the rail-haul operation was headed. The management of the ONTC, in their wisdom, decided to take 20 jobs out of the town of Englehart and move those to North Bay.

For people who may be living in towns and municipalities of a large size, especially in southern Ontario or one of the large urban centres of northern Ontario, 20 jobs may seem trivial, but for the town of Englehart, in the

centre of my riding, that is going to be a big blow, because those 20 families contribute a lot to the economy of Englehart and to north Timiskaming, but the different services which that maintenance-of-way point of the Northland Railway consumes in the Englehart area are also going to be lost. There are a lot of spinoff jobs also that will be lost for our area.

Bettyanne Thib, the mayor of Englehart, has started a mayor's task force in trying to preserve these jobs. Not only that, but what she wants to do with her task force is to work with the management of the ONTC on any future decisions that are being made for the future of our area, and especially in her case for the town of Englehart. We have been hit by this, and we hear that this may not be the end of those job cuts for the town of Englehart. We want to ensure that these job cuts are stopped, and even though the jobs themselves are not lost but transferred, ironically enough, to the Premier's riding, we feel we need them up our way, that North Bay is a large urban centre of northern Ontario and it doesn't need those 20 jobs from the town of Englehart.

So today I certainly want to say to Mayor Bettyanne Thib and the councillors and other citizens who are helping the mayor and her task force that I support their endeavour to fend off this job loss that the ONTC is bringing to the town of Englehart. The loss is expected to have a major spinoff, as I said, to the town; it looks like, in the form of lost income, about \$1 million to the town with only these 20 jobs, as it has a lot of spinoffs with the buildings that are there and the procurement that happens in the town of Englehart and surroundings because of those jobs and the work that is created there. So I'd just like to say to the people of the town of Englehart that I support you in that, and hopefully we can convince the Conservative government to stop pulling out those jobs from Englehart.

You have to sort of get down to those local clippings to start to see what all those impacts are. One of the concerns of municipalities, especially a municipality like Kirkland Lake that is over 60 years old and has old infrastructure, old sewage lines and water lines, is that municipalities of that age are constantly looking for government funds to help them renew that infrastructure because, especially in the harsh northern climate, water lines and sewage lines crack and are a victim of frost heave at this time of year. So the climate and the environment in northern Ontario are very harsh on our infrastructure, and it breaks down.

We were very concerned the other day when the government announced that basically the water fund tap was turned off by the government of Ontario. This is the first time in 40 years that the provincial funding tap is about to run dry, according to officials up there.

The Ontario municipal assistance program, commonly referred to as MAP, which provided funding to municipalities for local sewer and water projects, ended March 31, last month. The multimillion-dollar program had ensured adequate supplies of safe drinking water and effective waste-water management across Ontario since 1956. This program has been cut off, and it's going to have a horrific effect on small municipalities in Ontario which struggle with a very poor tax base, which don't

have the very high commercial and industrial local assessments that many larger municipalities do both in the north and in southern Ontario.

We in the north, more so than many large municipalities, depend on these provincial grants. We are very afraid as to what the outcome is going to be with programs such as MAP being cancelled. How are we going to renew our infrastructure in our northern communities? It is a big concern with our officials. I'll be working with Mayor Joe Mavrinac on that in the future.

Another area that's a big concern to us in northern municipalities is the cut in health care. The Tory government, as the Tory party in the election, had promised that health care would not be cut. But now that the government is in place we are seeing cuts in health care. Our hospitals have suffered a horrendous cut in their budgets. We have nurses in all three hospitals in Timiskaming being laid off; other workers at the hospitals being laid off. I spoke to one of the business managers the other day of the Temiskaming Hospital in New Liskeard and he said more layoffs were due in the fall in New Liskeard.

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In fact, the other day I was speaking to my daughter who attends Queen's University. She has many friends in the nursing program there and she was saying that many of her friends who are graduating from nursing in Queen's University—and I'm sure this is consistent also with many of the universities in Ontario right now—are contemplating, and many have made concrete plans, to relocate to the United States. The nursing jobs, just as teaching jobs, are not there right now and we're losing our young people. It's reminiscent of the old days when we used to have a real brain drain problem to the United States. This seems to be exacerbated right now through the cuts of this government. It's a shame to see our young people being forced to move to other jurisdictions such as the United States to find a livelihood.

Our whole health care system in Ontario is under crisis. I ask the government, and especially the Minister of Health, to start to reconsider and make some rational plans as to how we are to build and design an efficient health care system for Ontario.

I refer to the lack of teaching positions in Ontario and all the teachers who have been laid off over the last month, as they, in their collective agreements, have to have good advance notice if they are to be rehired next year by the boards of education.

Here's a clipping from the Northern Daily News headlined, "Cobalt Campus of the Timiskaming District Secondary School System has been Mothballed." So we've lost a high school campus. What's of specific concern to me about the Cobalt campus of TDSS is that it was totally dedicated to adult education.

When, eight years ago now, we lost our two open-pit iron ore pellet mines in Temagami and Kirkland Lake, we did an examination and a survey of the education levels of the people of the riding I represent. We found we had an inordinate number of undereducated workers in our riding. Possibly that was because of the tremendous job opportunities in the past. You could leave grade 8 or grade 9 or grade 10 in those days and get a very good, secure, high-paying job at one of our mines and mills,

much like you could if you lived in Oshawa or Oakville or Windsor, going to one of the auto plants, as I did when I grew up in Oakville, to start.

Once those mines went down and we lost those 700 jobs throughout the whole Timiskaming area, those people found themselves without the skills and without some of the basic education they needed to pick up some of the new skills of the modern workforce of the 1990s. So the Timiskaming Board of Education converted the Cobalt high school that had been mothballed and reopened it as an adult education centre. But alas, it finds itself having to close that campus and cut 18 positions right out of that campus that was providing education to adults in the south area of my riding centred around Cobalt.

Again, it just frustrates me that the planning really hasn't gone into these cuts. When I see the damage that has been caused by these cuts to the individuals who no longer will have those services there, no longer will have that opportunity, and, may I say, maybe the hope of regaining some of those skills they need to pick themselves back up and get some of those jobs that are starting to come available in the 1990s, it's making it very difficult for them to cope. It's making it very difficult also for our communities to cope with these cuts.

It boils down to everything when Mr Palladini, the transportation minister, cuts down some of the subsidies to municipal bus services. Again, this is hurting not only municipal bus services, but also he's talked about the deregulation of busing in Ontario.

On the one hand, I believe in a free enterprise system and believe that whatever the private sector can do, it should be allowed to do and encouraged to do, and if they can do that, the government should stay out of it. On the other hand, we have regulation to bring some balance where the private sector, for whatever reason, can't or won't provide a service. Intercity busing is a good example where, if you have unprofitable routes, as many of us do in the north or in rural Ontario, it is very difficult to make sure those towns and cities are served. By deregulating bus services, many of the towns in my riding are not going to see a bus pull in there and stop. Many of the constituents I represent really depend upon bus travel, not only to see family or maybe to find new job opportunities, but in my area, with the lack of health care facilities, many people are forced to go to Sudbury, as a regional health care centre, or even to Toronto, and many use the bus to get to those services.

We are very concerned that deregulation may mean we will not get the bus service we have enjoyed in the past to stop in places like Cobalt and Haileybury and New Liskeard and up through Englehart into some of the smaller communities along the way, and up into Kirkland Lake that is 15 miles off Highway 11. These are big concerns for us also.

All our school boards are facing job cuts, all our boards are suffering the same. The separate board in Timiskaming, which is a combined board from the old New Liskeard separate school board and the Kirkland Lake school board, is suffering those cuts. They came together a few years ago and amalgamated to find efficiencies. It's a very good example of where two boards have come together on their own to find some

efficiencies. They're working very well together now as one board. They have found many efficiencies. But yet more cuts are coming and they're going to be forced to keep cutting. That means less jobs. It also means less choice and opportunities for our children in the classroom.

One of the biggest pieces of news that came out of the cuts of last week that affected, not only Ontario right across the board but particularly my riding, was the devastating cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Of the 4,600 people who are currently, as of this week, employed with the Ministry of Natural Resources, over 2,100 people in two years will find themselves out in the street. This is going to have a devastating effect on the stewardship of our resources in southern Ontario and northern Ontario.

In my riding of Timiskaming, three satellite offices are being closed in the Kirkland Lake district. People who find themselves in a surplus position but maybe will have bumping rights—they're still going to have to find this out in the next two weeks so there's lots of uncertainty there as the government grapples with the new wording in the new collective agreement—some of them are going to have to move or are going to have to commute from the communities they were at to the Swastika office outside of Kirkland Lake. So there's a lot of uncertainty there.

Of course one of the major closures that's happened right across northern Ontario is the devastating closure of the forest fire bases in northern Ontario. Quite frankly, for the life of me, I cannot understand why all these fire bases are being closed. One of the greatest threats to our forest, the great boreal forest of northern Ontario, is man-made and naturally created fires. We know, and you all know, from the stories that happen by late summer, in July and August, in northern Ontario that we have incredible devastation from year to year in our northern forests. It's very important that the Ministry of Natural Resources have a very strong firefighting presence in northern Ontario, have the ability to react quickly to lightning strikes and the ability to spot fires that are getting away from camp fires and other bush operations.

Many times it is necessary to have fires in the bush area when there are different bush operations going on, or fires sometimes happen from sparks from bush machinery that is operating in northern Ontario. So that industry can flourish and do its job, especially during very dry times when the Ministry of Natural Resources will cease forest operations—men and women have to be laid off temporarily because of that—it's very important that we have a strong firefighting presence in northern Ontario.

I don't have the list with me right now, but there is a significant number of fire bases that are going to be closed right across northern Ontario, some also into southern Ontario. We very much worry about the firefighting capability of this reduced fire base operation now in northern Ontario. We just have to hope and pray for a wet season, a season that is not too dry and not too windy in northern Ontario so we do not suffer the losses we could really suffer.

The town of Temagami has been very strongly hit by the MNR closing, as it lost its office entirely. The whole Temagami district office has been shut down. That's a loss of 50 jobs to that community. Most of the people working in the Temagami office lived in Temagami. Those jobs, ironically enough, are going to be moved to the Premier's riding. North Bay seems to be benefiting from the job cuts happening in my riding. It is sad to see that, especially when Temagami has been such a strong focal point of forest management, of forest management conflicts between the different groups that use the forests in northern Ontario.

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It's very important that the government maintain a natural resources ministry presence in the township of Temagami. Reeve Wayne Adair is very concerned about this, and I support him in his shock and concern that this office is being pulled out of the town of Temagami. At one time we probably had 200 people in the Ministry of Natural Resources working in Temagami to try to deal with the forestry issue conflicts that have happened there.

I understand the Minister of Natural Resources will be releasing tomorrow a community-driven paper of the comprehensive planning committee outlining what the community has decided as to the future use of the forests in Temagami. We certainly await the outcome of that and will await after that the minister's response to that paper. I certainly would ask the minister today to give that paper a good reading over and to also make sure that he consults again with the people of Timiskaming before he makes decisions as to the future of the Temagami forest.

The 2,000 people who have been cut from the ministry right across the province—it's going to have a devastating impact, and while we don't have the exact numbers of the MNR job losses in the riding of Timiskaming, we just know from three offices being closed that it's going to be massive. We support the local officials who are going to be working with the government to try to hold that off.

When you look at the total job figure of 10,600 jobs that were cut last Thursday by the Conservative government, many of my friends and colleagues from the government side will say, "Well, you had campaigned on a very similar type of platform; you also agreed that government had to be smaller, that government had to be more efficient," and yes, you're right. I agree with the general direction that, like the private sector has over the last 10 years, we have to work to make sure that our operation here that we're responsible for in allocating the tax dollars that we collect from the people of Ontario is the most efficient and most cost-effective that money can buy.

What we had planned, though, was that we could downsize just about to the very same scale that you wanted to do, but we wanted to do it through natural attrition. We felt we could do that in five years, with the number just about 1,000 less than you had campaigned on in the Common Sense Revolution. We said that instead of 13,000 people, we could downsize the Ontario public service by 12,000 people in a four-year term of government through attrition.

I want to tell you the difference about this and why it's important, because it's in ridings such as mine where it's really going to be felt. When you immediately, in the next two years, take 10,600 family salaries off the market of Ontario, you can have a profound impact upon small communities right across the province. But not only do you have a profound impact on certain communities, some of the ones that I represent, you have an accumulative impact on the total province of Ontario.

If you had worked through attrition, you would have people who would then naturally be moving on to other jobs or who would be retiring. Instead of depriving them of the paycheque, they would be picking up a pension cheque. They would still be viable financially; they would still have an income; they would be naturally taking their pension, and we all know that the Ontario public service has a pretty good pension. Those people who obviously would be ready for retirement, past their middle years, would not have the tremendous consumer demands that young growing families have and would be able to survive on a pension cheque. The loss of that paycheque wouldn't have such a direct impact to the economy because there would be basically another cheque just about totally replacing that. They could subsist on that, and the economy of Ontario would move along.

But when you so quickly take out those 10,600 paycheques from the Ontario economy, I really worry about the car dealerships in my town, the fast-food restaurants, the hardware stores, all the small businesses in Kirkland Lake and the Tri-town area, and all through the towns of my riding. That will have a tremendous impact on the riding of Timiskaming, on northern Ontario and right across this province.

While we may have many arguments about some of the things that you're doing and some of the direction, on downsizing the government I would say to you, let's take our time; let's be a little more rational about how we do it; let's slow down. That means maybe you won't be meeting your financial targets as quickly as you want to, but you could balance that budget in four years if you really wanted to. You know the way to do that is to forgo that tax cut.

Today it takes a brave politician to stand in his or her place and say, "Maybe we shouldn't be cutting taxes for people," but I would say to you that with the present financial situation we find ourselves in, I don't think we're in a viable position to hand money out to people, especially when we're handing out money that we are going to be forced to borrow. As you know, that's the fact.

When the Treasurer stands in his place in a couple of weeks and announces what the projected deficit is going to be, I dare to guess it's going to be somewhere between \$7 billion and \$8 billion. A Tory government is going to have a \$7-billion to \$8-billion deficit, you're going to continue to have that, it's going to be downsized over the next few years but you're going to accumulate another \$20 billion of debt in the life of your government. You're going to have to compound the interest, the carrying charges you pay on the additional money that you're

going to be borrowing, besides the money you've inherited as debt from the former governments of the past, all of them. Why would you be borrowing, accumulating more debt and paying more interest, as we're now up to about 20 cents on the dollar in interest charges in Ontario and going to borrow another \$20 billion of those dollars to pay 20 cents on the dollar again on 20 new billion dollars? I don't know why you'd be doing that. I don't know why you're putting us into more debt.

I'll tell you what I'd do if you said, "What would you do if you were in the same situation?" I'd take the downsizing of the Ontario government a little more slowly. I would say, "We will balance the budget before the end of our current term, and to do that we're going to forgo that tax cut because we think it's irresponsible to borrow money to hand it out." Believe me, if you start to do it in the same reverse ratio of our progressive tax system, as you all know, the top 10% of the income earners are going to receive 50% of that tax cut.

You and I might disagree—I see one of the members laughing—but that's the fact. I would hope you don't do it that way and that if you are to bring in some sort of tax cut measure, if you want some stimulus effect of a tax cut, at least look at the low-income earners and say maybe, as we had proposed during the election, you would bring in a very modest tax cut but target with a stimulating effect. The way to do that is to look at the low-income earners and give them a break. Take some of the low-income earners off the tax rolls, because the money you have saved them won't stay in their pockets. They're going to go out and spend on some of the basics that we do produce here in Ontario: basic automobiles, basic appliances, basic home repairs that would have a stimulating effect on the Ontario economy.

If you give the tax cut in the proportion that our Ontario progressive tax system is based on and, as you know, the top 10% of earners are going to get 50% of it and a lot of those people up there don't need that extra money, we're very concerned where that money is going to go. A lot of it, most of it will be discretionary income. While some of it could be invested in the Ontario economy and that would be a good thing, a lot of it may even go to other amenities that are offshore, and we won't see the benefits of that money.

We're going to go offshore, to begin with, to borrow money from the main European banks, some of the Asian banks and some of the American banks to finance this tax cut, and ironically enough, in the end some of that money that comes to some very well-off Ontarians may end up back in Asian mutual funds, maybe in some offshore banking in the Caribbean and maybe in some luxury car purchases. In the end, it may just be a wonderful cyclical effect that the money is going to be borrowed overseas and end up right back overseas, so these other nations might be the real winners in this.

I would say to you, forgo it. Take your time—

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): You'd be returning yours?

Mr Ramsay: Yes, I would forgo the tax cut, and I'm saying let's do it for everybody. We should forgo it because we should be paying our fair share of taxes. If

you're earning \$78,000, you should be paying taxes on every dollar. I thank you for that, because that's what we should be doing.

1700

I'd say to the people of Ontario: Let's continue to pay our taxes. Let's don't raise them, but let's freeze them in place. Let's try to get the finances of the Ontario government into a healthy position so that we can attract business, so that we can look an exciting economic jurisdiction, because I think we can be one of the leading economic engines of this world if we put our minds to it.

The way to do that is to send a very strong signal that we're responsible for our finances here in this province, that we've had a debt and all three parties have been responsible for that over the years. We've all contributed to it. You're in charge of it now, and I'm saying to you: Let's don't build up further on it. Let's grab a hold of it and say: "No tax cut. We won't borrow for taxes." If you have to borrow to finance some essential services, we would have to be open to that, and if that's what we have to do, we'd even support you on that. But let's don't borrow for a tax cut, especially when the majority of that money, over 50% of it, is going to go to bank presidents and other top income earners in the province.

I don't know how I'll go home and explain after this budget that some of this tax cut's coming. Maybe only 8 or 8.5 points of this tax cut's going to come in this budget—I'm not sure yet—but some of it's going to come, and maybe it's only going to kick in in July of this year—we'll see what the Treasurer has in mind—but the greatest return of that is going to go to those high-income earners. It's going to be very difficult for me to explain that. Thank goodness I don't have to defend it, but I will have to explain it, and the people whom I represent in the riding of Timiskaming are going to be asking me why the government of Ontario is borrowing money, primarily from overseas accounts, to finance a tax cut for people who really don't need it when we are in bad financial shape.

My business sense always tells me that you can pay out a dividend to shareholders once you make a profit. In government terms, we're not making a profit now. We're in a terrible debt situation. We cannot afford a tax cut at this time. What we can afford, though, is to send a very strong signal to the people of Ontario and to businesses around the world that we won't change the tax structure here. We're not going to raise it; we're going to freeze it. We're going to work at responsible reduction of our financial situation in Ontario so that we will be a low-cost jurisdiction. Our welcome sign to business is, "Open," and up here in Ontario we want job creation. I'd ask the government to heed these words.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I feel obligated to make a short comment—

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): To break the agreement.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Go ahead.

Mr Carroll: Did we have an agreement? Anyway, I will just make a short comment on the point made by the member for Timiskaming about why didn't we do it the

way they had suggested, where we allow the cuts to the civil service to happen through attrition and where we delay the tax cut or make it a smaller tax cut and do it the way they had proposed during the election. I say to the member for Timiskaming that you suggested that to the people of Ontario during the election and we suggested our plan to the people of Ontario during the election, and interestingly enough, the people of Ontario chose our plan. I think we now have an obligation to give to the people of Ontario what they chose during the election, and that is the Conservative plan rather than the plan put forward by your party. I think at this point in time we really are obligated to deliver what we promised and what the people of Ontario chose.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? Would the member for Timiskaming like to sum up?

Mr Ramsay: Just quickly. I thank the member for his interjection there. You bring a very good point: You won and we lost. That's the point of your argument and you're correct. Because of the present situation of the economy of Ontario, that it's not as buoyant as we would all hope, and the severe economic impact I think we're finding with these job losses in the public sector and the tremendous drag that's going to have on the economy, I would ask you today to reconsider that position.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I want to take 10 or 15 minutes today to make some comments on how the Tory government is devastating some of the communities and towns in my riding with the announcements that came out last week. I met with David Hughes, the mayor of Cochrane. It's completely devastating to see what the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Natural Resources has done to that community—done it all with a fax letter sent to them at the same time as the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance was making the announcement here last Thursday. He sent a fax saying it's unfortunate that 30 to 40 jobs are going to be moved out of that community. The end result is that you're going to end up with all kinds of empty houses. It's going to affect the stores, the education system, the health care system. For a small town of 4,500 people to get this kind of news with a fax letter, where the minister doesn't even have the courtesy to answer the phone—since Thursday at 2 o'clock, he's refused to answer the phone to that particular community.

I might point out that Cochrane is not the only community having a rough time. Every community I represent—and it's a huge area. The member for Timiskaming is saying that he has an area of 180 miles. I wish I only had 180 miles to travel on Highway 11 representing my area, because it takes in from Iroquois Falls to about 30 miles west of Hearst, which is about 250 miles, and it also goes up the coast from Moosonee, Moose Factory, up the Hudson Bay coast to Peawanuck. It's a huge riding to represent, and with the announcements being made last week and the week before during question period, I was saying why would the Ontario government agree to a tax increase, a 15% export tax increase, on softwood lumber exports going to the States?

All the campaigning I heard during the election campaign was, "We're going to reduce taxes and we're

going to give a 30% tax cut," which I don't agree with, but on top of that we're finding out now that they're going to increase taxes on softwood lumber exported to the States. They're going to hurt the lumber industry. They're going to throw thousands of people out of jobs.

They've also gone into increasing user fees. Instead of calling Mike the Taxfighter, now we can call him the Taxhiker, because we've seen user fees being increased in almost everything that is being done: about \$13 million, I understand, on just one announcement.

With the extra revenue coming into the province of Ontario from the softwood lumber, and you relate that right across northern Canada, you're talking about \$175 million, and Ontario's going to get their share. This is all going to be gathered into a pot and used to give a tax break to the wealthy people in Ontario, mostly in southern Ontario. The wealthy people on Bay Street, the lawyers, the doctors that are making the big incomes are going to benefit from the tax cut. Northern Ontario is not going to.

All of the announcements as far as restructuring and cutting, whether it's the Minister of Natural Resources cutting I believe it's \$45.9 million in forestry, giving it back to the large companies that are supposed to manage the forest from now on—we know that they didn't do it in the past and they won't do it in the future. The government has to be involved.

You talk about taking 20 MNR offices and fire stations and closing them down. It's just devastating for these towns and communities when there is no line of communication opening up. The decisions are all being made by a few people in the Premier's office. I believe they're even ignoring the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and not consulting him. I believe he's just getting a paper and: "Here, sign it on the bottom. We'll fax this out to all the northern communities and it'll be done."

The people in northern Ontario are not accepting that. They've been lobbying me. I've met with some of the people last Thursday and again on Friday. The media stories that are coming out are saying that it's a disgrace, it's shameful to do all of this cutting, slashing and burning with no respect for the resources that have built Ontario to what we have today.

I just want to go through some of the fire stations that the Tories have announced they're going to cut: Armstrong, Blind River, Elk Lake, Elk Lake fire base, Englehart, Gogama, Hornepayne work centre, Hornepayne fire station, Ignace, Kapuskasing fire base, Kirkland Lake, Manitouwadge, Matheson, Nipigon, Pickle Lake, Sundridge, Temagami district office, Temagami fire base, White River work station. All of these announcements that were made, these are all small towns, and most of these are single-industry towns. To lose one or two jobs is devastating for a lot of these communities. For a sawmill that shuts down, the spinoff effect is the equivalent of four-and-a-half jobs that are lost throughout the community. So when we add that up in the community of Cochrane, with a base of 4,500 people, imagine what the mayor and town council are going to have to do now to be able to gain back that \$2 million that they're losing in resources that are coming in through taxes and

through people spending money in the community, and the kids that they're going to have to pull out of the schools and take to other communities or take them out on the streets, as some of the families have had to do in Toronto, put them in sleeping bags out on the streets.

1710

It's devastating what is happening up there, and nobody seems to be concerned a single bit. They just get their marching orders from the Premier's office or from the Deputy Premier—they're the only two people who were elected from northern Ontario, and we're quite fortunate that that's all there was. They just have no respect whatsoever, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—it's an arrogant position that he has taken and it's a disgrace to all the people of northern Ontario to find out that they elected a Conservative government and all the decisions are being centred around one or two people dictating what's going to happen.

It's going to get worse. Northern development and mines—we don't have very many staff in northern Ontario, but when you realize that they're going to get rid of, I believe it's 126 people from northern development and mines in northern Ontario, it means that northern development and mines offices are going to close. They're going to completely devastate the office in Sudbury. Over the next year and a half they'll get rid of 90 staff out of that office. There's no end; people can't see an end to what is going to happen.

I can go in to the education system. I've talked to teachers; as a matter of fact, I have some family members who are teaching, and they're saying, with just the announcements that were made between four and five or six school boards in southern Ontario, and northern boards are making the announcements now, you're not going to have an education system. You're going to lay off all the junior teachers, 10,000, 15,000, 20,000—whichever side Mike Harris gets out of bed on in the morning, that's the numbers they're going to throw out. You're going to end up with the complete destruction of the education system. You're going to have what they call, teachers are telling me, crowd control. That's all you're going to have. You're not going to have an education system left. That's a spinoff effect right through the whole province. As I said, once again it's more devastating in northern Ontario. Just in one school board in Kapuskasing, there are 22 teachers who will lose their jobs. In the other one, I believe there are five or six who will lose their jobs.

In communities that are less than 10,000 people, if you take the spinoff effect, 10 means 50 jobs. Corner stores will have to close and other stores will have to downsize and lay off the people, and a lot of them will have to close because they are small, family-run businesses where you have a man and a woman and sometimes one of the children helps them out in the business. They're not big stores.

It's not a good day. I would rather be up here giving praise to some of the things the government is doing, but over the last 10 months there is no praise we can give to what is going on. They're completely devastating, with no respect for anything.

Transportation: Last year in September, we said we were getting close to wintertime and it wasn't a good time to make an announcement that you were going to lay off 125 seasonal and part-time workers for the winter maintenance program, that as a result you were going to have people lose their lives on the highways. It happened over the wintertime. We were begging and pleading with them not to do it at that time. Now we find out they're going even one step further. They're going to eliminate almost all the construction in northern Ontario over the next two years in terms of highways.

I put all the blame right on the doorstep of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines because he is not standing up and fighting. I don't even believe he has a say in cabinet, if he attends cabinet meetings. The results we're getting in northern Ontario are that he is not speaking up for the north.

The Acting Speaker: There's a little bit too much noise coming from the government benches. Could you please keep your conversations down a little? Thank you.

Mr Len Wood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you intervening, because I don't like to see the laughing and joking that's going on about the devastation of northern Ontario as we're speaking and trying to represent the areas.

I'll go back to MNR. The fire station in Kapuskasing is going to be closed. Last year we saw communities that had to be evacuated because fires got out of control. This government is saying now: "We don't care. We're not going to fight the fires and we're not going to be able to evacuate the communities." They are putting lives at risk. There are people at risk in northern Ontario.

In some communities the fire season might not start for another two months, but in other areas in northwestern Ontario, the end of April, the beginning of May is the fire season and it could go on for a couple of months. The danger is that people could lose their lives, maybe not from the fire but from the smoke if they can't get away from it. These communities don't have roads and have to be evacuated by airplane, and both the ministries involved in doing this, the northern development and mines and natural resources, are cutting and slashing and laying off all the staff, with no respect for the people who live in northern Ontario.

To some people, Kapuskasing might seem like a remote northern Ontario community, but if you look at a map, it is right in the geographic centre of Ontario, with miles and miles and miles that have to be travelled before you end up at the Manitoba border. It's not remote to me. I enjoy living up there, but we need a government that will take the responsibility and say: "We're going to protect the families that are living up there by choice. We're going to make sure they have good health care. We're going to make sure they have a good education system and a transportation system and a good road system." But this government, in the announcements it has made over the last number of weeks and in the 10 months it's been in government, has devastated every piece of assurance people had.

We had an excellent airline that was in business for over 25 years: norOntair. It did a good job of transporting

people in and out of these communities and people were happy with it; you had a comfortable Dash-8 service. Now we have communities with smaller planes and other communities where the government has said, "We thought the private sector was going to go in and look after this, but seeing as the private sector won't do it, we're going to try to work out a contract with somebody else to do it." In the event, they'll end up using Ministry of Natural Resources airplanes to fly into Chapleau, Gore Bay and Hornepayne, because the private sector is not going to go into the areas where there's not a dollar to be made.

1720

The Minister of Transportation says: "We have to do something for our friends that paid so much money to help us get elected, all our Tory members that got elected, so we're going to deregulate the bus industry. We'll let them cherry-pick the spots where they can make money, and for the other smaller communities, well, the buses will just drive by and that's it. But we know we're going to get rewarded, or already have got rewarded, in their financial support to get elected."

There have got to be reasons for this, because no human being, whether a Liberal or a Conservative, would want to put that much pain and suffering on people in northern Ontario. So there have got to be reasons for it. Some of the reasons, I guess, are when you get into the 30% tax cut that is coming. If somebody is making \$10,000 a year compared to somebody that's making \$200,000 a year, the tax cut to them is a lot greater and they're going to benefit from it.

People have been telling me over the last couple of weeks, "It doesn't make any sense for me or my neighbour to be sitting there and looking forward and excited over a tax cut that's coming if half of the other neighbours on the same street lose their job from MNR, they lose their job from teaching, they lose their job from the hospital, they lose their job from any of the other ministries that are being cut."

Actually, they're being fired, because there is not going to be a fair system of redistribution of the employees. They're going to go to the bottom line and fire the bottom 20,000 or 15,000 or whatever it is. That's only within the government sector. Then all of the other broader public sector jobs, they're going to lose people as well. With the billions of dollars they're taking out of the health care system, the estimations are that the layoffs could end up being as much as 125,000 people over 18 months or 24 months.

There are not going to be any jobs that are going to be created as a result of promising, "Well, the 100,000 or 200,000 people that are depending on government jobs, we'll throw them out of work, and the 30% tax break will create the jobs." It will not. Most of the people say, "I'm going to invest" or "I'm going to buy a house in Florida" or "I'm going to take an extra trip that I couldn't take before." But as a jewellery store owner with one or two employees, do you think I'm going to reinvest that money back into my business? I'm going to enjoy life and I'm going to build for my retirement.

So where the jobs are going to be created, I'm not sure. A lot of other people that are writing stories for the

newspapers are convinced that to go out and borrow \$20 billion or \$25 billion to give a 30% tax break to the wealthy people in Ontario and say that it's going to create jobs, it's not going to do it; it's going to add to the debt in the province of Ontario. Then when the NDP government gets re-elected again in 1999, we're going to have to deal with a bigger debt than what we ever had before. In the 42 years of Conservatives before, each and every year they ran a deficit and they ran a debt. They left the Liberal government with a fair-sized debt when they were thrown out of government in 1985. It sounds like in 1999, when they're thrown out of government again, they're going to have left another huge debt that the NDP government is going to have to work at to try to bring down at the same time that we'll try to create jobs within this province.

I'm pleased that I had this opportunity to speak briefly on the motion for interim supply.

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and talk about a subject of great interest to me and utmost importance to the people of Ontario. The Red-Tape Review Commission forms an integral part of the government's agenda. You might say it's the third leg of the government's economic plan to cut taxes, cut spending and cut the size of government and the impact it has on the people of Ontario.

I was very fortunate to be named chairman of that commission in the financial statement in November. Other members of the commission are Marcel Beaubien from Lambton, John O'Toole from Durham East, James Brown from Scarborough West, John Hastings from Etobicoke-Rexdale, Barb Fisher from Bruce, Joe Spina from Brampton and Tim Hudak from Niagara South. We're supported by a dedicated but small and able secretariat and an advisory committee of experts from business and the professional community.

Interjection: Working free of charge.

Mr Sheehan: Oh, yes. I've just been reminded that we work free of charge. There's no extra emolument for being on this commission.

Mr Christopherson: You get \$78,000 a year—

Mr Sheehan: If you're on a committee, you get more for attending a committee or—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair: Order, please. Direct your comments to the Chair.

Mr Sheehan: Not any more? Okay. Our intentions were pure.

Since November, we've been working on researching other areas that have attacked this plan and we've been designing a plan to attack this monolith which is our regulatory environment. We've met with over 100 associations, business people and institutions, and we're determining what their problems and solutions and priorities are. We'll continue to meet with any interested group.

Our short-term goal is to eliminate the regulations that are on the books now. The long-term is to achieve a cultural change among politicians and bureaucrats and the citizens of Ontario that more government is always best. We want to develop a process by which the benefits of

regulations will be measured against the social and economic costs.

It may be of interest to know that no one has ever counted or enumerated the number of regulations that we contend with. No one knows how many licences, procedures, operation manuals, certificates etc we must live with. We are compiling that inventory now. It might be of interest that in 1992 they determined that there were 43,000 different forms, which cost us over \$21 million to print and over \$1.5 million just to circulate.

California had a study done, and it was determined that excessive regulations are the single largest inhibitor of investment. Red tape increases the size and cost of government. It wastes taxpayers' time and money, and it drives up the price and drives out jobs.

Analysts for the Canadian Manufacturers' Association have pointed out a Stats Canada study which points out that it costs Canadian manufacturers almost \$48 billion to comply with regulations. It's estimated that \$20 billion is Ontario's portion of that. If you divide that, 10% of that would be \$2 billion, and if you divided that by the average industrial wage of \$35,000, you're talking about almost 55,000 jobs represented in that number.

There are some other bizarre examples of regulations. We just recently cancelled a regulation that required 400 hours to learn how to be a projectionist in a movie theatre, but the armed forces only take 400 hours to teach you how to fly a jet. In the nursing home business there is a prescription that says twice a day you shall give to the residents so many cc's of a certain mouthwash containing no less than so many parts per million of a certain chemical. I think we're getting a little bit over-prescriptive.

It would be interesting to tackle one problem and just kill it, but if we did one a day, it would be 365. Most years we pass between 800 and 1,000 new or replacement regulations. Funnily enough, the overall number doesn't seem to exceed 4,500. It's like fighting the Greek mythical Hydra. Every time you chop off a head, you end up with two, and you just keep going.

1730

Most of the ministries have significant and important undertakings in this area and are trying to reduce the red tape in their respective ministries. Our job, in addition to spearheading the cancellation of these regulations, is to help them eliminate, consolidate and move to self-regulation wherever possible. The most significant aspect of the job will be to design what I call a knot-hole through which government people must pass their regulation if it's to get on to the books.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. There's too much noise in the Legislature.

Mr Sheehan: We'll want to know, is the regulation really necessary, what is the cost of implementing the regulation, what is the cost of the institutions' or the businesses' compliance, and what is the benefit to be derived by the community. If they can't pass that, I don't think the taxpayers and the job creators should have to pay that bill.

Regulation is how legislation hits the road. That's where it gets applied. This government doesn't have any

problem preserving high standards in the environment, in health and in safety, and we have an unequivocal commitment to preserve these standards. However, we don't want to be in the business of regulating and monitoring every aspect of life. We believe you must set high standards, make those standards be well known, and set penalties high enough so that they serve as a deterrent. We think self-regulation is a very acceptable process. People don't object to good rules.

We have to restate, I think, the importance of personal responsibility. Governments just have to stop trying to be all things to all people at all times. Red tape, we think, kills jobs, stifles creativity, discourages investment and reduces innovation. One example from the home builders' association identified that \$1,000 of additional regulatory cost effectively moves 16,700 households below the threshold for affording houses. That translates to about 3,000 additional families that won't buy a house in a year.

Removing barriers to job creation is a top priority of the Premier, the cabinet and this government. Our commission is honoured to be part of this. We have a one-year mandate. The job is expected to be done, and we're told that it can be done.

To conclude, by removing barriers to job creation, we are helping to build a positive business climate, one that encourages new investment and business expansion, and a welcome opportunity for economic growth and job creation. By using common sense, we continue to protect public safety and the quality of life. Cutting red tape is a big part of our government's plan to bring hope, opportunity and jobs back to Ontario. This is a good news story and it's worthy of all-party support. I thank you for the time.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I'm delighted to join this debate on interim supply. In the absence of my colleagues, though I'm sure they're tuned into their television sets, I want to relate to the members opposite and anyone who is listening—and I want to go back to a time in Ontario, my grandfather's day. My grandfather came to this province, came to this country—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): When the PCs were in power.

Mr Cordiano: You're right—following the Second World War, like so many other people who came from around the world. He saw in Ontario a land of opportunity, a land filled with tremendous hope for the future and tremendous promise of a future. Like so many other people, he worked very hard to build a business and he taught the rest of us that only through hard work could you succeed. Of course, my grandfather was important and special to me. I relate this because my dad passed away when I was a young boy, but my grandfather passed on his wisdom to me about what was important. My grandfather was a small-l liberal and a big-L Liberal, but the one fault he had was that he was very loyal to his friends even if they were in the wrong party. I'm going to make an admission, speaking to the member who commented earlier: My grandfather helped one of his friends who happened to be a good Progressive Conservative back in his day, the Honourable John Yaremko, and

yes, he was a good Progressive Conservative, and I stress the word "Progressive." In those days the Conservative Party was still progressive. No longer. But I relate that to you because the other important thing that my grandfather taught me was that in every aspect of our lives, whether it was in communities, whether it was in business, or in politics, people made all the difference. It was people, good people, who made things happen. And when we forget about people in politics, then I believe we risk becoming irrelevant. That's what I think is happening to this government. They are forgetting about people.

No one will argue with the need to balance our budget. No one will argue that we have to make government more accountable and more efficient. These are all good things. We all aspire to that. Everyone in this House would not argue with the need to balance our budget, but I do not believe that we can cut our way back to prosperity, just as I did not believe we could spend our way back.

At a time when corporations announce record profits and then turn around and continue to downsize, far too many hardworking people in this province are beginning to lose what little confidence they had left. For far too many people, Ontario has become virtually futureless. All across this province I've talked to students who've said to me: "Why should I bother continuing with my education? When I graduate there isn't going to be a job." I've talked to 50-year-olds who've lost their jobs and are being told, "Don't bother re-entering the workforce; you're too old; you won't find a job," and hardworking people who have jobs and fear they may be the next to lose their jobs, their benefits and their families' security. We have to meet these challenges head-on, and I say that because I do not believe this government clearly understands that in any way.

I want to deal with the agenda that this government has put forward and the myths surrounding that agenda. I want to talk about the myths that have been perpetrated by this government, about their agenda, and how they claim this will restore prosperity to Ontario, how this will once again make us a prosperous province. They're going to cut their way back to prosperity.

Let's deal with that for a moment. Let's just deal with the first myth, which says, "We must eliminate the deficit as quickly as possible because that will create a climate for investment and growth and job creation." I've heard many a backbencher on the government side say, "Well, it's costing us \$1 million an hour to keep paying for that deficit, so it's urgent that we cut the deficit, balance the books, immediately." Well then, I ask the government, why is it that you're going to accumulate an additional \$20 billion of debt over the next four years? Why is that? If it was so important to balance the budget in a quick period of time, as quickly as possible, then why not do that? Why not balance the books, if that's what you were after and if that would lead to prosperity? That's a myth. That's a myth that's being perpetrated.

Myth number 2: "There's only one taxpayer, and that taxpayer pays out of the same pocket." Again I say to the government, yes, we know there's one taxpayer, but at the same time that you claim you're going to cut taxes,

and I believe you will bring about that income tax cut and will keep your commitment, you're increasing user fees of all kinds. You're increasing user fees for even accessing libraries; you're increasing user fees in the health care field, for drug benefits; you're increasing user fees at the municipal level indirectly, where municipalities will be forced to implement those user fees.

1740

That taxpayer, that mythical one taxpayer, will be faced with an additional burden which does not relieve the taxpayer of that burden of user fees. Call it what you will—user fees—don't call it a tax, but it is money coming out of that one taxpayer's pocket, which means there's less money for purchasing other things, less money to spend on consumer goods, which according to your agenda would drive forward the economy and permit job creation.

Myth number 3: We will set priorities. You said in the last election campaign that you would not touch health care, that you would not touch education, that you would not touch law enforcement, that you would not cut agriculture spending. Those were solemn commitments you made in the last election campaign, that you would not cut the funding in those areas. What did we see over the last number of days and in the economic statement of November 1995? We saw cuts to all those areas.

We saw cuts in transfer payments to municipalities, which thus created a situation where municipalities were forced to cut their law enforcement budgets, were perhaps forced to lay off police officers, were forced to make all kinds of cuts in that area. Solemn commitments were made by this government during the last election campaign not to do that. They've gone back on their commitments.

Mr Len Wood: Some people seem to be lying.

Mr Cordiano: I won't use such strong language, but they certainly did not keep to their word; they did not do that. They have made cuts in the hundreds of millions of dollars, in the billions of dollars, and in those areas—let's deal with education for a moment: \$800 million has been taken out of the budget for education. That will seriously impact the classroom. That will seriously impact the dropout rate.

I asked the Minister of Education in the estimates committee: "Will you be held accountable, will you be held responsible for those cuts? Will you be held accountable if in fact classroom sizes increase?" They certainly will under the recipe that's been prescribed by this government. Those education cuts will have an impact in every community across this province. All the parents of this province are concerned about their children's education and they have a right to be, because classroom sizes will go up. The dropout rate will be affected, in the wrong direction.

I defy the minister to make the case that this will not be the consequence of his actions. It is certainly going to be. It is certainly to lead to higher numbers of dropouts, to a greater increase in class sizes. There is no question of that. You cannot take \$800 million out of the budget in education and tell us in this House that this will not affect education, that this will not affect classroom sizes,

that this will not impact on students right across the province.

What else do we have in terms of education costs that are hidden, costs that are direct? Tuition fees at our colleges and our universities will be increasing to the tune of some 20% each and every year for the next number of years. That's what this government has done. What will that do? What impact will that have on people of modest incomes across this province? They will no longer be able to send their children off to university or college because they may not be able to afford it, and thousands upon thousands of students will be faced with the prospect of even greater loans they have to take out to pay for those tuition fees.

The government says, "If you want it, you're going to have to pay for it." That's the world we live in. That's the new Ontario. That is the hard, cold face of this government. This Conservative government is saying: "If you want it, you have to pay for it. If you can't afford it, we'll let somebody else worry about that, because we can't afford it any more."

There's no option. There's no discussing that with this government. There's no provision for hardworking people to ensure their kids will have a better tomorrow, to ensure they can improve themselves through education. We've always believed that. We've always made progress in this country and in this province because we believed in a public education system. We believed that was the way to success, that was the way to improving your chances to succeed in our society.

When you take that away, you're taking away something so fundamental and so critical to people right across this province. You're not giving them any hope for the future: countless students; parents, who worry about their children's future. Those who have graduated and cannot find that first work experience can't even graduate now. Never mind graduating; they're certainly not going to find an Ontario that is growing in terms of opportunities for them.

The final myth that's being perpetrated by this government is that the tax cut they will bring about next month in the budget will lead to an enormous number of jobs being created. By its own accounting, 750,000 new jobs were promised by this government in the last election campaign—750,000 new jobs. That's what Mike Harris said in the last election campaign: "My tax cut will ensure that 750,000 new jobs will be created." I say to the government backbenchers: We'll see about that. The proof will be in the pudding. In the end, I guarantee you, trickle-down economics has failed elsewhere and it will fail in Ontario, because it's a tired, worn-out American notion about what works in the economy that's been proven to be wrong—the importation of American Reaganomics, American economic initiatives that you're undertaking now.

What did I read the other day? In New Jersey, the same state from whence you took your Common Sense Revolution and imported it to Ontario, the very state, they have a terrible job creation record, one of the worst of all the 50 states across the United States. If that's a harbinger of things to come in Ontario, then I say to the

backbenchers: Watch out because you're going to be scrambling in a few years to explain why it is that your great economic revolution that you've brought about in this province is failing to create those jobs for middle Ontario, for those young people who are looking at a bleak future and who see no future because there isn't the prospect of getting a job in their own field, their chosen field. When that fails, you're going to be scrambling in your ridings to try and explain that.

This government promised 750,000 new jobs over the course of its first administration. Let's not forget that, because that's the stimulus you're providing. I think it's important for all the people of this province to know that's the job creation program of this government, the tax cut which will result in a 30% reduction in the income tax rate in Ontario. That's what the sum total of your job creation initiatives amounts to.

I would just summarize and say—just let me comment in final form—that we will see, when this government brings forward its budget, that these myths that have been perpetrated on the people of this province, all these myths, will not come to pass. In fact, this government's economic agenda will not restore prosperity to Ontario in the way they have indicated.

1750

Oh, for some people this will work very fine. For some people it will mean a tremendous gain. For some people in Ontario, they're going to be very satisfied. With the tax cut, they're going to be very satisfied. The friends of this government will benefit from the privatization that will be undertaken—massive privatization. The friends of this government will benefit, yes, indeed. There will be those who will like the initiatives undertaken by this government.

Yes, you are very popular right now. There is no doubt of that. People say, "Yes, give this government a chance to make more efficient, to make more accountable, to make more effective, government and its institutions." Yes, we agree with that, but do not mistake that for what people will hold you up to in terms of their expectations. The measurement they will use is: "Do I have the prospect of a better future economically? Do my children have a chance at succeeding at something? Will they in fact be employed? Will they in fact have the opportunity to go to school in this new Ontario?" That's how people will measure the success or failure of this government.

In my opinion, I think you will be a miserable failure for too many people in this province who will be left behind as casualties. The casualty list is beginning to grow. This experiment that you call a revolution will fail, because it's based on false premises and a bunch of myths that will be proven to be wrong, will be proven to be incorrect.

Mrs Boyd: I have only a few moments to wrap up this debate, because we have agreed this motion will pass by the end of today's session.

Let me just say that what my colleague from Lawrence has said is very important. It is very important that the government recognize that people are seeing through the crisis it has manufactured. It must have been quite disturbing for many of the members when the Minister of

Education and Training let the cat out of the bag around the creation of crises so that you could get your own way. But that in fact is what the policies of this government have been: create a crisis, frighten people, and then they will lie down and let a bully government do whatever it chooses to do. That's exactly what we have seen.

There is no doubt, as we all have agreed in this Legislature before, that there needs to be a real effort on the part of whoever is in government to get our spending under control, to be accountable to the taxpayers. No one disagrees with that. But we are not going bankrupt, as the Premier tried to claim. We are bankrupting ourselves by destroying our services with the kinds of budgetary actions this government is taking.

It is important for us to recognize that the gross domestic product depends very heavily upon many of the very services that this government's financial cuts are going to destroy. Education is a good example. The factor of education in the calculation of gross domestic product is extremely important. It is very necessary for us to stop and take a look at what the cuts to education at all levels are going to mean in terms of our measurement of gross domestic product.

It is also important for the people of Ontario to understand that this government, which talks about being accountable to people, is playing a shell game around budgetary matters. I had a constituent say to me the other day: "I don't understand what it is you were talking about on Thursday. It sounded like a budget to me. But then, the thing that happened in November sounded like a budget to me and what happened in July sounded like a budget to me. So what's different?" I said that what's different is that you've got a government that isn't bothering to put forward a budget. What it's doing is making little economic announcements here and there, repeating them, and trying to hide from people the cumulative effect, and it has not been accountable enough to bring forward a budget which could be debated thoroughly. What they do is give us bits and pieces. What they do is try and say to the people of Ontario, "We know what we're doing, but we haven't enough confidence in ourselves to do that in a straightforward and open way."

It's important for us to be calling the government on that kind of behaviour. It is similar to the kind of behaviour it has undertaken with its omnibus bill, Bill 26. It is similar to the kinds of actions they have taken in trying to hide and dissemble about what it is they are actually doing. It is important in a debate like this, where we are talking about the interim supply motion, to call the government to account for its methods, not just for what it is doing but for its methods of governing, because indeed the way in which this government is governing is very destructive of the democratic principles and procedures that have been revered in this place for a long time. It is an effort to govern by subterfuge.

I would say to my colleagues here in the opposition benches that it is increasingly going to be our job to say to the people of Ontario, who want to understand what is going on, who want to understand why there is such distress and dismay in the land, want to understand why they feel as though somehow there's some con game

being played, that indeed there is, that the kinds of methods this government is using to forward its policies are very designed to cloud the issues, to try and keep people from understanding the long-term effects of the decisions being made.

In this debate, the government perhaps understands that through this process we are going through in this Legislature, through the process that will happen when it brings forward its budget, the opposition parties are very clear that part of our job will be to help educate the people of Ontario about exactly what kind of methods this government is prepared to employ to get its own way. Believe me, that's exactly what we see here. We see a group of people with powerful friends who are governing to favour those friends, and every single policy they bring forward

is designed to further those interests. We will be asking at every turn, "Who benefits by the policies of this government?" I can assure you, it is not the vast majority of the population of this province, and it certainly isn't those who are most vulnerable.

The Speaker: Mr Eves moved the motion for interim supply for the period commencing May 1, 1996, and ending October 31, 1996. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Wednesday 17 April 1996

Mercredi 17 avril 1996



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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 avril 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHAMPIONNAT DE BALLON-BALAI

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : Je voudrais apporter à l'attention de l'Assemblée sur une action remarquable que je considère comme étant le plus grand exploit au sein du sport amateur au cours de la dernière décennie.

En fin de semaine dernière, l'équipe Embrun Plumbing d'Embrun a remporté pour la neuvième fois au cours des 10 dernières années le championnat canadien de ballon-balai dans la catégorie élite-hommes, grâce à une victoire de 4 à 2 en grande finale contre la formation du Québec.

Après une carrière amateur comblée de succès, la majorité des joueurs de l'équipe Embrun Plumbing participaient pour la dernière fois aux championnats canadiens. Je profite de l'occasion pour les féliciter.

Au cours de la dernière décennie, ils ont été de grands ambassadeurs pour ma circonscription de Prescott et Russell, pour la province de l'Ontario, qu'ils ont représentée à chaque année aux championnats canadiens, et pour le Canada, qu'ils ont représenté avec succès au Championnat mondial de 1991.

Je veux souligner la performance de Yvan Skip Breton qui, au cours des 10 dernières années, a été le meilleur joueur de ballon-balai au monde. Il a reçu le titre de Mr Broomball à huit reprises, honneur remis au meilleur joueur du championnat canadien.

Pour terminer, je désire rendre hommage à tous les joueurs, à l'entraîneur Wilson Montgomery et ses adjoints, ainsi qu'aux dirigeants qui ont participé au succès de l'équipe au cours des 10 dernières années, et tout spécialement au propriétaire d'Embrun Plumbing et grand amateur de ballon-balai, Maurice Lemieux.

OUT OF THE COLD PROGRAM

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): When the residents of the Niagara neighbourhood and Parkdale realized what a disastrous effect the cuts in social assistance were having on their communities, they got together to organize the Queen Street Out of the Cold. Out of the Cold is a volunteer organization which provides emergency food and shelter in the winter months. The Queen Street program opened in mid-January with the support of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, the patients' council, as well as several west-end church congregations.

In less than a month, a volunteer base of 200 was

mobilized and enough materials were scavenged to start up. Local Queen Street businesses contributed goods or labour. Hank Young, a cook, stayed up one night a week along with his friend Patrick to make sure we offered a good breakfast. Portuguese Canadians, senior citizens, organized and prepared two evening meals.

From time to time at this Out of the Cold you would witness the poor helping the poorer. Each Sunday night since it started, the program has served a hot supper and a hot breakfast and provided a takeaway lunch. Each time, the program served approximately 120 suppers and provided a mat to sleep on for 50 or so people.

The volunteers are exhausted by the experience. How long does this government think volunteers will be able to fill in for a government that has abdicated its responsibility to those who most need its protection? How long do you think people will be willing to cook meals, scrounge food and stay up all night watching over guests? When people run out of energy to clean up after this government, we will see the true extent of the damage being done to our most vulnerable citizens.

FERRIS PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to bring attention to a success story in the local management of provincial parks. Two years ago the government of Ontario closed Ferris Provincial Park near Campbellford. The town of Campbellford and the township of Seymour rallied behind the park and were able to take over the management of the park on a year-to-year basis. Since then, the \$30,000 annual deficit has been eliminated and indeed a profit has been realized.

The turnaround of the park is the result of several factors. First, the public awareness of the park has increased due to the promotion of the park by Friends of Ferris Park and by local service clubs. Second, co-op students from the local high schools have volunteered their time working at the park and enhancing its services. Third, the park is now open year-round. And fourth, the community is holding several events to help raise money for the park. The latest event was a maple syrup festival which was very well attended.

The community is currently negotiating with the Ministry of Natural Resources for a five-year contract to manage this park. If this is successful, the community will be able to reinvest the profits into the park, allowing for educational and capital projects to be enhanced.

The success of Ferris Park is an example of how partnerships can be developed within communities. It should serve as a model for other parks that are experiencing similar difficulties. All that is needed is a willing municipality and strong volunteer organizations.

EDUCATION

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): This House shortly will be presented with a petition signed by 15,000 citizens of Ontario opposed to this government's educational policies.

The government's Blueprint for Learning states, "The need for increased funding for Ontario's post-secondary institutions is obvious." It also says, "Ontario's current student assistance program is seriously flawed.... The result is a tragic loss of opportunity for young Ontarians, particularly those from lower-income families. As they lose their chance for higher education, they lose many of their choices for career, lifestyle and personal goals."

The real tragedy here is that this government doesn't practise what it preaches. What this government is good at is contradicting itself. It promotes the need to invest in education, yet it slashes funding. It acknowledges that students can't be further burdened by tuition, yet it implements massive tuition increases. It acknowledges that we need to focus on training our young people and retraining our workers, yet it eliminates programs.

The draft white paper clearly suggests this government is determined to create a two-tiered post-secondary education system. This government's agenda in post-secondary education is only reduced funding. It is not concerned with accessibility; it is not concerned with learning; it is not concerned with teaching; it is not concerned with jobs.

The process is backwards and it is wrong. The government is making cuts before the white paper—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

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SCIENCE NORTH

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Last Thursday, Science North in Sudbury was hit by yet another cut to its provincial operating grant. This marks the fourth cut in the last eight months to this northern cultural attraction. Worse still is the arbitrary and unfair way in which the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation has applied these cuts. Of the five provincial cultural attractions funded by MCCR, only Science North has been targeted in every single round of funding cuts.

This discrimination against our northern agency is not acceptable. Before the cuts even began, Science North was the lowest-funded agency on a per-visitor basis. It also is the most financially self-sufficient of the five cultural attractions; 40% of its budget comes from the province, while the other agencies require well over 50% of all of their revenue to come from the government. Yet the minister has seen fit to single out Science North for cuts which are well in excess of those applied to the other southern Ontario attractions, and she's done so each time rounds of cuts have been announced.

The obvious impact is reduced service to northern Ontario. Given Science North's focus on science education, this will have a long-term negative impact on students and science teachers. This kind of discrimination really hurts northern Ontario, but unfortunately, given the magnitude of the job loss at the Ministry of Natural

Resources and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines announced last week, discrimination against the north seems to be the new trademark of this government.

MARKET GREY-BRUCE

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): On Sunday, April 14, I was pleased to have the opportunity to attend the Market Grey-Bruce spring food fair and trade show. I was very impressed with what I saw, the excellent work being done by volunteers in Bruce and Grey counties.

The Market Grey-Bruce committee is a non-profit group of volunteers from the farm, rural, tourism and small business sectors. These volunteers have organized to facilitate closer contact among various agricultural, processing, manufacturing, craft, foodservice and hospitality industries within Bruce and Grey counties.

The objective of the Market Grey-Bruce is to improve the local economy by promoting local products and services, finding new markets at home and beyond, and creating an image of Grey-Bruce as a source of high quality and great hospitality.

Market Grey-Bruce has created a unique database with information on hundreds of Bruce and Grey producers. As well, a new logo has been released which includes the words "Pride of Grey-Bruce" and will now be displayed in local food stores and restaurants, indicating that Grey and Bruce food and food products are available in those establishments.

I would like to commend all of the individuals who devote their time and energy to making Market Grey-Bruce a success. It is initiative and dedication such as theirs that promotes pride in our communities and prosperity in our local economies.

FIREFIGHTING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The people of northern Ontario are getting angry at a government that continues to talk about its commitment to the north while it simultaneously cuts back in a frighteningly drastic manner the services we need to sustain development and maintain public safety in our part of the province.

Yesterday, the Minister of Northern Development visited Thunder Bay in an attempt to convince our people that a reduced commitment to firefighting is nothing to be concerned about. Minister, we just aren't buying it.

Like winter road maintenance and snowstorms, you cannot legislate the number of fires in this province. If you say you will spend what is needed to deal with the situation, then why needlessly alarm the residents of the north and the entire province by cutting back on your base commitment?

Unfortunately, like so many other decisions made by this minister, the bottom line is one of cost-cutting at the risk of public safety. By closing 17 out of 45 fire stations in the province, you're simply putting all of us in further danger if the number of forest fires rivals that of last year.

As is now becoming the pattern, all of this is being done without any consultation with the people in the north, the people who are most affected by these decisions. By reducing your base budget and eliminating over

one third of the fire stations, you're proving once again your priorities are cost-cutting, regardless of the consequences.

Surely you should have learned a lesson from your colleague the Minister of Transportation, who discovered after the fact that his attempts to reduce costs not only downgraded service to a dangerous degree on winter roads, but ultimately cost the province more money.

Rethink your decision so we can avoid an unnecessary crisis later.

HAMILTON'S ACADEMIC HEALTH CARE NETWORK

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to a group of community leaders in Hamilton who have put together an alternative plan to the Health Action Task Force report that would have shut down St Joseph's Hospital, in the heart of my riding. These health care leaders have come together in a way that, has never been seen before, and I do want to mention their names: Allan Greve, from St Joseph's Hospital; Dr David McCutcheon, from the Hamilton Civic Hospitals; Dr Jennifer Jackman, Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals; Peter Carruthers, St Peter's Hospital; Mary Sutherland, Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital; Dr John Bienenstock, faculty of health sciences, McMaster University; Dr Mark Levine, Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre; Dr John Hewson, health services advisory committee; Betty Muggah, Victorian Order of Nurses, Hamilton-Wentworth; and May Cohen, faculty of health sciences, McMaster University.

These community health care leaders have come together and put together a report that not only allows us to keep St Joseph's Hospital but indeed allows us to keep all the acute care hospitals. They've done this out of a need to step in as the result of the government's shortening the time the Health Action Task Force had from two years to one year, which left a report that wasn't as thorough as it should have been. But I want to pay compliments to this group, as well as regional chairman Terry Cooke, who did an excellent job, and urge everyone to support this on the district health council.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I rise today to inform the House of my private member's resolution calling on the federal government to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

This morning, I held a news conference with the Canadian Police Association, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Association of Ontario, CAVEAT and Victims of Violence, all in support of my resolution.

Our police work long, hard hours to get evidence against the accused, the prosecution works long and hard to convict these criminals, judges and juries spend a great deal of time deliberating their verdict and sentence, only to be undermined by section 745 of the Criminal Code. This section gives convicted killers the ability to apply for a parole hearing after serving only 15 years.

With me today at the press conference were Gary and Sharon Rosenfeldt, whose son Daryn was killed by Clifford Olson. Under section 745, Olson can apply for a parole eligibility date in August of this year. At this time, this family and the other victims' families will go through a renewed form of torture, having to relive the horrible experience they've already gone through. This goes beyond comprehension. Why would the federal Liberal government allow someone such as Clifford Olson the possibility of parole and cause these victims to relive their nightmare? Tomorrow, when my resolution is debated, I hope the House will stand as one in unanimous support.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'd like to inform the members of the assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from Jersey, Channel Islands, headed by Mr Brian Grady, director of education, and Mr Andrew Mallet, assistant director of education. They're accompanied by Mr Earl Campbell, director of the Scarborough Board of Education. Welcome to the assembly.

We also have some former members here with us as visitors today. Mr Michael Dietsch is sitting in the east lobby, the former member for St Catharines-Brock. I see Mr Ron Lipsett up in the visitors' gallery, the former member for Grey. I also recognize Mr Howard Sheppard, the former member for Northumberland. Welcome.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LIQUOR REGULATIONS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'm pleased to announce today some changes to the liquor regulations in Ontario. Most of these changes under the Liquor Licence Act and the Liquor Control Act will take effect on May 1, 1996, and, I believe, will benefit consumers, businesses and communities in this province.

Some changes are a first step towards updating Ontario's liquor regulations to reflect today's attitudes. I'd like to use extending the hours of sale and service of alcohol in bars and restaurants until 2 am as an example of this. Until now, Ontario had the earliest end service times in Canada and bordering states. Extending hours to 2 am will be good for tourism and convention industries and it will allow Ontario's hospitality industry to better compete for business with neighbouring jurisdictions.

Another change allows golfers to buy and drink liquor on playing areas of golf courses where they already have a liquor sales licence and if they choose to apply for a golf course endorsement. This should curtail illegal drinking practices that take place on golf links. Golfers will be able to have a drink while playing. However, they will not be able to hold or drink liquor while operating golf carts. Golf club licences are responsible for ensuring this is strictly adhered to. The Criminal Code applies to

impaired driving on a golf course just as it does on a public road. Four provinces already allow this particular practice: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and New Brunswick.

Other changes include prohibiting the possession of alcohol in two more provincial parks, Dryden's Blue Lake and Kenora's Rush River, prior to and including the Victoria Day weekend, effective April 19, 1996; and clarifying the activities of manufacturers' representatives and manufacturers' responsibilities as they relate to their representatives. Also, beer price changes will be more responsive to market forces, with the Liquor Control Board of Ontario continuing to ensure minimum and uniform pricing across the province.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to make it clear that these changes are not part of a comprehensive review of the liquor retail and distribution system. As I mentioned, many of these changes will help to stimulate the tourism and hospitality industries, which are now gearing up for their busiest part of the year. Benefits will include increased employment, particularly seasonal, which should be good news for some college and university students.

I think most of us here today would agree that these changes are timely. We believe the vast majority of Ontarians are responsible in their consumption of alcohol. Also, there's no denying that these changes will benefit the province and those who visit it.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO SECURITY OF THE LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): On March 20, my colleague the Minister of Finance and government House leader, Ernie Eves, announced in this House that the government would hold a public inquiry into the events that had occurred outside the Legislature a few days earlier, on March 18. I am pleased to inform the House today of the establishment of a commission of inquiry and of the inquiry's terms of reference.

This inquiry will conduct a full public review of the issues and events of March 18 and the circumstances leading up to those events. The accountability and behaviour of all individuals and organizations concerned will be dealt with in a fair and open process.

The government has appointed as commissioner of this inquiry the Honourable Willard Z. Estey QC, former Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and former Chief Justice of Ontario. Mr Estey has had a long and distinguished career as a jurist, a lawyer and an academic. He is a Companion of the Order of Canada and is past chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier University. Mr Estey has acted as a commissioner on a variety of royal commissions, including the Air Canada inquiry and the inquiry into certain banking operations. Mr Estey is chairman of the Ontario Press Council, a lifetime member of the board of governors of the York-Finch Hospital and has sat on the extraordinary challenge committee for the hearing of appeals under the Canada-US free trade agreement.

The government has asked Mr Estey to inquire into the events of March 18, 1996, and the circumstances leading

up to them, including the actions, rights and responsibilities of all participants, the effect of those events on the operation and security of the Legislative Assembly and on access to public buildings, the policies and responses of the police forces and the security agency involved and such other matters relating to these events as the commission considers appropriate.

Mr Estey has been asked to report his findings and make any recommendations he considers advisable to me so that events of public concern can be avoided in the future. His report and any additional interim reports he may issue will be made public. All ministries, boards and agencies and commissions of the government are to assist the commissioner to the fullest extent so that the commissioner may carry out his duties.

These terms of reference provide Mr Estey with the foundation upon which a public inquiry can be conducted in order to answer the public's questions surrounding the events of that day. This inquiry will ensure a full, comprehensive and public accounting of the events of March 18.

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Our government cares very deeply that the interests of vulnerable adults in this province are protected and that vulnerable adults are able to act on their wishes and rights. I am proud today to announce our initiative for vulnerable adults in Ontario. On March 29, our government kept its promise to repeal the Advocacy Act and eliminate the Advocacy Commission. We did it because Ontarians deserved better.

There are approximately 300,000 vulnerable adults living in Ontario. By vulnerable adult, I mean a person who, because of a disability, medical condition, communication problem or age, has difficulty expressing or acting upon his or her wishes. Many receive attention from families, neighbours, volunteers, community organizations and care providers who can help them express and act upon their wishes. However, some are without this kind of support and some are physically, sexually and emotionally abused.

As members of a civilized society, Ontarians have a responsibility to address these issues. As a government we have a responsibility to address these issues in a realistic, compassionate and practical way, a way that recognizes and supports the role of families and also addresses the needs of vulnerable adults without family and friends to help.

The measures I am announcing today are backed by a funding commitment of \$3 million. Ontarians will get the most out of these dollars because they are going directly to community-based services; no duplication, no new bureaucracy, no new legislation.

Today, I am pleased to tell you about the two parts of our initiative for vulnerable adults: (1) supports for advocacy services and (2) strategies to deal with abuse and neglect.

First, I will focus on support for community-based advocacy. At both the hearings of the standing committee on administration of justice and at discussion groups a

word came up often. That word was "coordination." Our government will take a coordinated, community-based approach to advocacy services. Services are already being delivered in Ontario, but these services are not equally developed in all regions of the province and are not linked as well as they could be. In addition, vulnerable adults, their families and others need better ways to find out about them.

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The initiative I'm announcing today will make major improvements in all these areas.

My ministry will support the development of community-based services through funding and community development. We will provide funds to one or more community organizations to develop and maintain a province-wide information and referral system, including a toll-free telephone line and an interactive Internet site. In the meantime, the current advocacy information referral toll-free line will stay open.

We will also provide funding for a clearinghouse service based in the community for education, training and other resource material to assist vulnerable adults, families, volunteers and service providers.

We will refocus and nearly double the funding of the community action fund, which will support community organizations to assist vulnerable adults to express and act on their wishes. Funding criteria will emphasize building links and partnerships among community organizations.

Those who provide care and other services to vulnerable adults have special responsibilities in protecting the interests of vulnerable adults. Our government will require, through service contracts and performance agreements, all institutions it operates or funds to provide accessible ways for dealing with concerns of vulnerable adults and their families.

When there is a problem, the first point of contact is often with health care professionals, social workers and lawyers. These professionals are best able to help when they understand the needs of vulnerable people and can identify the situations that make them vulnerable. In consultation with community organizations, our government will work with and encourage professional bodies to include in their training the role of professionals in addressing the needs of vulnerable adults.

We must, however, go further than that, and that is the focus of the second part of our initiative dealing with abuse and neglect. Our government will work with service providers, professionals and community partners to develop a series of measures. We will work with several ministries to develop minimum safeguards to protect against abuse in institutions funded or operated by the province. We will work with professional associations, community groups and institutions to develop and implement protocols to address abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services, in consultation with my ministry, will develop guidance for enhancing police response to elder abuse. Also in consultation with my ministry, the Ministry of the Attorney General will review the existing guidelines for crown attorneys on victims/witnesses with special needs

and explore the current practice with respect to prosecutions of abuse against vulnerable adults to determine if further guidelines should be developed.

Our government will explore a number of options, including legislative amendments, to deal with abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults. Our approach is non-intrusive. It supports community-based services without creating legislation or duplicating existing services. It reflects government's proper role: providing support to communities in a way that acknowledges and builds on the fact that families, volunteers, community workers and health professionals are already delivering excellent services. And our initiatives send this message loud and clear: Abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults will not be tolerated in Ontario.

It is never enough for a government merely to have good intentions or to want to just do the right thing. We must make sure that the steps we take are not only guided by compassion but also grounded in reality. That is the approach that will work best. Vulnerable adults in Ontario deserve no less.

LIQUOR REGULATIONS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): To the minister: I note in your comments that it's clear that these changes are not part of the comprehensive review of liquor retail sales and distribution. Does that mean that the three points you have issued today are not a part of any comprehensive review or that you haven't reviewed them at all, or does it just mean that in light of what you said both in this House yesterday and outside, you thought you'd better add that at the end here?

I just want to point out that notwithstanding the benefits that you see in this, Minister, the government is sending out a very mixed message. Just recently, you've added \$1.2 million to spending for the RIDE program, which I assume is to catch drunk drivers, notwithstanding you're giving them an hour longer to drink, and at that same time you've taken away the advertising against driving while drunk. So Minister, whatever it is you want to do, whatever it is you want to benefit the province of Ontario, I just wish that you'd get the message clear, because you're sending a very mixed message.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO SECURITY OF THE LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): The government has finally capitulated to the opinion of the public and announced a public inquiry on the events leading up to March 18. I wonder why it took so long to develop the terms of reference and I wonder too why, having promised that they would consult with the opposition, they just barely informed us a few minutes ago of the terms of reference of the inquiry, expecting us to have some input. Again, the bullies across the way are not interested in consultation. I wonder too why the inquiry is going to take so long. Security in this place surely is a vital matter which should be dealt with quickly.

I applaud the appointment of Mr Justice Estey. He is certainly a distinguished jurist. However, I hope we do not have a repeat of the Homolka inquiry, where we

fetter the hands of a very competent jurist to do his job. In particular, I would suggest that the terms of reference ought to be broad enough to look into the actions of the Office of the Premier in the events leading up to March 18 and beyond.

The people of Ontario deserve to have confidence in their public institutions and I hope that we will be able to get some real answers after this inquiry.

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): In response to the Minister of Citizenship's statement on advocacy, I would say to her that there are approximately 300,000 vulnerable adults living in Ontario, some of whom are physically, sexually, emotionally abused, that everyone has recognized that there is a tremendous need for coordination.

I've read her statement several times and I say to her, where is the coordination? Your words do not meet your actions, and while we wait to see whether or not the actions that you have taken are effective in any way, I would say to her that coordination is a key. You've heard that from everyone. We do not see, in your throwing some money into community-based services, where you have responded to the need for coordination.

I would say to her as well that the abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults will not be tolerated in Ontario. We agree with that. We think she has finally realized that legislation is necessary. She has referred to that briefly in her report. But I would say to the minister, I have read this and I'm not sure what this means. I'm not sure it gives any comfort whatever to vulnerable adults; I'm not sure it gives any comfort to the hundreds of volunteer and family members who advocate daily on behalf of those vulnerable people; I'm not sure it gives any comfort to anyone that you are moving in a coordinated fashion, as was anticipated by the former Conservative member from Hamilton, the late Father Sean O'Sullivan. In fact, I would say to the minister that I do not think that Father Sean O'Sullivan would be proud of your announcement today.

I will say again to the minister that the people of this province expect you to live up to your commitment that you would protect vulnerable adults and vulnerable people in this province. I don't believe you have done this. We'll be watching very carefully to see what the impact is of the statement you have made today, but certainly it contains nothing that would suggest a coordinated approach to advocacy in Ontario.

1410

LIQUOR REGULATIONS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations in his announcement today talks about stimulating tourism and the hospitality industry. It's a given that the greater the access and availability of alcohol, the greater the consumption of alcohol. What an ill-reasoned proposition we have here. Stimulate tourism and the hospitality industry? It's going to stimulate drunk driving. It's going to

stimulate spousal abuse. It's going to stimulate violence against children and against people on our streets. It's going to stimulate violent crime. It's going to stimulate increased drinking and literal alcoholism among increasing numbers of people and the incredible social costs associated with that.

It is the height of hypocrisy to talk about this as stimulating any sort of any economy when this government has gutted any number of preventive programs against drunk driving, against spousal abuse, against abuse of children. This indeed is criminal.

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Decades of hopes and dreams preceded the passing of the Advocacy Act, and you dashed those dreams with the mere saying of five words: "The Advocacy Act is repealed." You tear everything asunder and then you pick up a few scraps from the rubble and offer them as solutions. What have you done? You take away millions and millions of dollars from agencies that serve vulnerable people and then you offer a few pennies back, saying: "Look at this. We've offered \$3 million."

In the community action fund there was \$1.25 million already. You said you've doubled that. That brings us to \$2.5 million, or \$2.3 million and you've got a few extra thousand dollars for some other things. It isn't new money. What you're offering here is not three million new dollars but approximately \$1.5 million to \$1.7 million worth of new money. That's what you're offering.

You talk about what you're doing by way of supports to the vulnerable communities and you talk about a hotline. How do people know about the hotline? How do vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities get to know about your hotline?

And then you do something worse. You say: "Those who provide care and other services to vulnerable adults have special responsibilities in protecting the interests of vulnerable adults. Our government will require, through service contracts and performance agreements, all institutions it operates or funds to provide accessible ways for dealing with concerns...."

That's not the problem. Agencies have been dealing with these concerns for a long, long time, but you're making it appear as if the problem is with the agencies. The problem is not with the agencies, but that's what you're saying through a paragraph of that kind. Shame on that kind of statement.

You talk about agencies having to do this work, but we know, and they've told us in committee, that they have no legislative power to deal with abuse. They have no legislative power to have right of entry to deal with abuse where there is suspicion of abuse. What are you giving agencies the power to do?

The other part of your statement is "Dealing with Abuse and Neglect." I have no problems with creating protocols. That's all right. I have no problems with developing guidelines for enhancing police response. That's all right. But it doesn't deal with prevention, and that's what we were talking about. It does not deal with

rights advice. It does not deal with right of entry to enter a place where there is suspicion of abuse.

Madam Minister, two things. Seniors and people with disabilities are too smart not to discern the deception. Seniors and people with disabilities deserve justice, and you're not giving them that today.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO SECURITY OF THE LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I'd like to respond briefly to the terms of reference for the commission of inquiry. First of all, I want to say how disappointed I am with the process the government has used. The credibility of the government House leader is at stake today when he promised, both publicly and in House leaders' meetings, that draft terms of reference would be circulated to the opposition parties, that a roster of possible appointments would be shared with the opposition House leaders and that there would be a meaningful effort to have a consensus developed on the terms of reference.

We were told last week at the House leaders' meeting that the draft terms of reference would be shared with us at 12 noon on the Thursday, and then, when that wasn't possible, it was going to be 1 o'clock. Then it was going to be Friday morning. Today we got them at about 11:30 and were told: "That's it. Those are the final terms of reference."

My view is that where these terms of reference get specific, they're aimed at the demonstrators; where they're general, they're aimed to favour the position of the security force. They don't have credibility. The process doesn't have credibility and the government—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired. The member for Dovercourt on a point of order.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Mr Speaker, I want to rise today on an important point of order which I would like to ask you to listen to and look into and come back at your convenience with a ruling on. It's regarding the issue of the use of question period by ministers to make statements under the guise of answers to questions from government backbenchers. It's an issue that's been—

Interjections.

Mr Silipo: The members might be interested in listening to this because it's an issue that's been raised before, indeed by members of all parties. It's an issue that comes specifically, in the immediate situation, out of a question asked yesterday by the member for St Catharines-Brock to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. This is the point I want to make: The basic rule that I think has been accepted in this Legislature, not just by way of precedence but also supported by the rules of this House, is that question period should not be used as the place in which ministers make statements about government policy. That's a position that's been, as I said, taken by previous Speakers.

Mr Speaker, certainly there were a couple of rulings on this very point going back in the last Parliament, and I want to draw your attention specifically to at least one of those back in 1990 when then-Speaker Warner said very clearly: "Answers to questions should not be used to present to the House changes in government policy. Members will know that our standing orders provide a specific time period each day during routine proceedings for that type of announcement. The procedure for statements by the ministry also provides for replies on the part of members of the opposition parties. I therefore agree with the honourable members who made these points yesterday that question period should definitely not be used for presenting changes in government policy."

I want to suggest to you, Mr Speaker, that yesterday, when the member for St Catharines-Brock asked the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism a question around the announcement the minister had made around the Niagara casino the day before, what he was doing was in effect announcing government policy by way of answer to that question, something he should have done, and we would have welcomed, as an announcement made during ministers' statements, as we've just seen today.

I would ask you to look at that and I want to particularly draw your attention the fact—I personally have to say I had some sensitivity to this because the ruling I just referred to came out of a complaint that was lodged by the Liberal members of the day and indeed the member for Parry Sound, as he then was, the government House leader of the third party, on this very same point that I am making today. Interestingly enough and ironically enough, it came out of a question I asked at the time as government backbencher to one of my ministers at the time. I would ask you to look into this, Mr Speaker. I appreciate—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member has made his point very well, and I will look into it.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On another point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation a question with respect to the Ontario settlement and integration program and pointed out that the cut to that program was 20%, and she stood up to say the cut was 13.2%. Her ministry document says—

The Speaker: Order. Would the member take his seat, please. He does not have a point of order.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

PREMIER'S RIDING ASSOCIATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. We were all rather stunned to read in the paper this morning that, for example, in the year 1994 you claimed \$18,000 in personal expenses from your constituency association, clearly an association that provides political support for you as a member but not as leader of your party.

What was particularly surprising to us was to see how you had spent that money. You spent \$1,047 on dues to

the North Bay Golf and Country Club. You spent \$7,620 to upgrade your housing, and that's in addition to the \$15,000 accommodation allowance you got from the government. Another year, you spent nearly \$200 for a liquor permit for something referred to as a stag.

Premier, can you please explain to us today how you would justify using riding association funds to pay for a stag, a golf and country club membership and an accommodation top-up, none of which have anything whatsoever to do with your role as the member for Nipissing?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The stag, I think, was before I was a member for Nipissing, back in 1981, although I am not sure of that. The riding association would have to look into that. I don't believe at the time I was even a member of the riding association, having stepped down to seek the nomination at the time, but I don't have information on that.

I can tell you that what I have always advocated is that legitimate expenses for government should be charged to government, and be up front and be public, not tax-free allowances, not money that is put there whether you incur the expenses or not. Legitimate expenses for associations or for parties should be put there and be up front and be accounted for, and I have always done this.

I have asked my association, for example, and my employees and my staff, when I was first elected and again when I took over leadership of the party and again on becoming Premier, "If you're in doubt about whether this travel expense or this expense, whatever it is, promotion in my role as a member or as Premier or as leader of the party, is a legitimate expense, then make sure, if it's a legitimate expense, you charge it to the party." If it's an expense that's used for fund-raising, for example, which was considerable in my role as leader of the party—as you know, I inherited quite a significant deficit as leader of our party—then in fact those expenses should be there. But be up front about it, be public about it, put the expenses there and be prepared to answer for them.

I've answered for them and I would suggest all members do the same.

Mrs McLeod: Premier, a few years ago, in one of your party's news releases, you said, and I quote: "When people think of politicians these days, their thoughts are usually not very complimentary. People tend to think of politicians as opportunists and hypocrites." When we compare the pronouncements we've had from your government since you were elected with what we see today, the charge of hypocrisy seems to stick.

You were the one who recently said that some people choose to be homeless by choice. I guess what you meant was that they made the choice not to run for office and bill the riding association for their accommodation costs.

You were the one who told seniors that they had to pay a user fee for needed medication, while you were charging your riding association thousands of dollars for golf and country club fees.

You were the one who told students, students like the ones who are demonstrating outside the Legislative Assembly today, that they had to tighten their belts to pay for higher tuition, while you were enjoying the good life at the Albany Club.

I wonder, Premier, how you can preach such restraint, telling everyone from seniors to students to the sick that they have to tighten their belts and do their part, while you were acting in a completely opposite way. How can you explain away such complete and total hypocrisy?

Hon Mr Harris: I want to point out—and I will answer the question—that this has nothing to do with taxpayers' money, nothing to do with administration of government. Technically, it is out of order.

Let me say very clearly that I have asked my association, I have asked the party—as you know, political parties have reimbursed expenses of leaders of parties since day one—including the member opposite, I might add.

I have said that if you're in doubt about whether this should be taxpayers' money, reimbursing expenses to make sure that I or any members of our cabinet or our caucus are not out of pocket in carrying out legitimate party expenses, we will answer to the party for our expenses. I answer to the party and I answer to my association and I have said if we are going to err, and I want to tell you that we quite frankly make sure that our expenses are lower than any other Premier, than any other government, than any other administration, and I stand by that today.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My point of order is to ask you to ask the leader of the official opposition to withdraw her unparliamentary language. I think "hypocrisy" is a word that previous Speakers have found unparliamentary.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'm not aware of its being out of order. If it's out of order, I'm sure the honourable member would withdraw it.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I read into the record a quotation from the Premier referring to politicians as hypocrites. That is a matter of record and I can't withdraw it. If there's anything unparliamentary in the question I posed in terms of the language used in this House I would certainly withdraw the language so that the concern I am raising can be still placed before this House and the people of this province.

The Speaker: Is this your supplementary?

Mrs McLeod: Premier, I would not quarrel with you for a moment that we in fact enjoy support in our responsibilities as a leader from the Legislative Assembly, and that's well recognized. We enjoy support from our parties as party leaders for extraordinary expenses and that's recognized. But we're talking about billings that you have made as a member and as a party leader and perhaps even as a Premier to your riding association. We're talking about expenses which don't seem to be able to be explained as related in any way to your role as a member or as a leader. We seem to be seeing a part of a systematic, 15-year pattern of what seems to me to be an abuse of the public trust.

I'll defer to your statement of record in terms of the 1981 billing, but we know that in 1994 you were billing the constituency association to pay Albany Club bills. Premier, I have to ask you what you think the public will conclude from this. I wonder how they conclude anything other than that when you were first elected as a politi-

cian, you realized from year one that you could bill personal expenses to a constituency association and that you continued that pattern as leader of the party, and may be doing the same today. How can you justify that 15-year pattern of using these monies to pay personal expenses unrelated to your work?

Hon Mr Harris: The Leader of the Opposition seems to imply that it's okay to bill the central party but not the riding association. They're both political parties, they both have objectives in mind. Quite frankly, your political party centrally had a surplus and mine actually had a big deficit. My local riding association had a surplus and there was money available there to assist the leader.

The goals of the political donations given to the party are this: Elect the member, elect your member leader, elect a Premier, elect the government. That's what political donations are for, and I have no difficulty in answering to my riding association and to my political party for expenses that have been incurred along the way for me to be elected five times in Nipissing, as leader of the party, and as Premier. Quite frankly, my association has been pleased and proud to support any expenses they—not me—have determined are important for me to carry on as leader of the party, to go out and raise funds, any entertainment expenses necessary for me in meeting new people in Toronto, so I could get travelling around the province, so I could be Premier of all the people, not just of Nipissing.

I freely acknowledge that. I have reported that. It is there as a matter of public record. If somehow or other the member is suggesting that back when the legislator used I think 100% taxpayer dollars to bail her caucus out of a \$300,000 overpayment in caucus funds, because the leader's office couldn't stay within the funding allocation it was given—quite frankly, if we have ever felt more money was necessary to promote our leader, whoever that leader was, we've found it should come from party funds, not from taxpayer funds, as was the practice of the Liberal Party.

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The Speaker: New question, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs McLeod: This is also to the Premier. I think there are some serious allegations here and I would ask you to bring some integrity to your response. You know full well that all the expenses of our caucus were within Legislative Assembly guidelines and approved by the assembly, and that is a matter of fact.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question to the Premier.

Mrs McLeod: Let me return to the specifics of your billings to your constituency association. It is clear you used riding association funds to pay for your golf club membership. You were a golfer and a golf pro before you were elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly. I suspect you will continue to golf long after you are a member. So how can you claim that paying more than \$1,000 for a golf club membership in the North Bay Golf and Country Club is an expense related to your work as a member?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member will be interested to know that I have been offered free golf memberships

all around the province. I have turned them all down because I believed that was a conflict of interest. Also, I want to tell the member that as a former professional golfer and now an honorary director of the CPGA, I have a card that entitles me to free access and free greens fees to play any golf course in the province, which I also refuse to use in my role in politics.

I can tell you that my riding association has determined that membership, even though I'm not in North Bay very often, and paying up front rather than ever being in a position of accepting free golf or free memberships—you might want to check the record of all your members to see who else does it this way—that they would pay the North Bay golf club membership dues to belong to a club. They would pay as well to the Albany Club, they would pay to the Davedi Club in North Bay, feeling that even though I'm not there very often, this was important in my role as member, as leader, and as the 22nd Premier of the province of Ontario. I want to tell you, I'm proud of my riding association.

Mrs McLeod: Premier, your golf club membership was more than \$1,000. The students who are outside this Legislative Assembly building have been asked by your government this year alone to pay \$1,000 more in tuition. I wonder what you would say directly to those students outside today to tell them why they should have to dig deeper into their pockets to pay for their education while you dig deeper into your riding association to pay for your green fees.

Hon Mr Harris: I think if you will check the record of expenses, you will find that this administration is less than any administration in the last 10 years, which gives us more taxpayer dollars for education, for health care, for welfare, for those very services. One of the ways we do that is that if there is an expense, we make sure it's paid for out of party funds, not government funds. Would that the other two administrations had done the same.

Mrs McLeod: Premier, you campaigned on political integrity. You have said publicly that a lot of your time has been spent convincing the public you're different, and in fact we will soon be voting on a bill that you've presented on MPPs' pay and pensions that we all support in this Legislature because it makes MPP compensation open and transparent to the public.

Now that it is clear your compensation includes golf club memberships, payments to the Albany Club, extra housing allowances, what does this say about the integrity you were going to bring to government?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me be very clear. My compensation includes not one cent—not one cent of money in my pocket for golf club memberships, for Albany Club, for other memberships through there. Not one cent.

The Speaker: New question, third party.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Premier. The \$1,047 to the golf and country club in your home town represents about two months' payment to a single person on social assistance in this province. How can you, Mr Premier, justify that kind of an expenditure from not party funds but party funds that are raised at a 75% tax subsidy through the tax credit system? How can you justify spending taxpayers' money for a golf and country club membership when

you've cut back welfare recipients by 22% because you say the taxpayers need relief?

Hon Mr Harris: You may disagree, but none of these questions—and I'll answer them—have anything to do with my role as Premier, as a minister in government, and quite frankly, they are technically out of order. But if the member wants to get into how political parties spend their dollars, then I tell you you're getting on a very slippery slope of how your party has spent dollars. The Liberals are getting on a very slippery slope of how they have spent dollars. Quite frankly, these are not taxpayer dollars.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): They are tax dollars.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Oakwood.

Hon Mr Harris: Taxpayers make a voluntary contribution to the political party of their choice. They ask the political party to use those funds for their leader, for their members, to elect members, to raise more money, to carry out party business. Quite frankly, I am happy to answer to my party and to my riding association as to how those funds—

The Speaker: The question has been answered.

Mr Cooke: The Premier can try to say this is not taxpayers' money. The reality is, it is taxpayers' money, because there is a tax expenditure, forgone revenue, a rebate, a tax credit of 75% which you and I and every taxpayer in this province pay for.

I come back to the same question. When the Premier goes out and lectures people on social assistance that they're getting too much in this province and when he cut them back 22.6%, how can he justify having his golf and country club membership, his money at the Albany Club and other benefits that no other person in this province would have? How can he justify that expenditure in Ontario today?

Hon Mr Harris: I've never lectured anybody, particularly those who are unfortunate enough to be on welfare.

I want to be very clear here today. In the suggestions coming forward from the members of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, I'm getting the sense that you are suggesting we scrap the tax-free portion of political donations to parties. I want to say to you, if that is the suggestion, we are planning reforms to that as well. If that is a suggestion, we will put that into the mix with all three parties to do that. If that is not the suggestion, then what I suggest to you is that dollars spent from riding associations you justify to the riding association; dollars spent in the provincial association you justify to the provincial association.

Mine are made public. I am happy to justify those. I hope you are happy to do the same. But I would tell you this: The justification for taxpayer dollars is the reason you are over there and we are here.

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Mr Cooke: I assure the Premier that with this continued arrogance and abuse of taxpayers' money, he'll be back here very quickly. The purpose of the tax credit legislation is to strengthen democracy, not to enrich the Premier, and that's exactly what he's doing by abusing the legislation that was put in place.

I have a final supplementary. It's very simple, very clear. I hope the Premier will give a straightforward

answer. We have consulted with accountants today and have been told that many of these expenditures by the Premier should be claimed on his personal income tax filing. I want to know, did you claim these expenses, a total over the last three years of \$37,166? Did you or did you not claim these on your income tax returns?

Hon Mr Harris: While you would know and the public would know that my personal income tax is none of your business, I'm happy to tell you that I have claimed every penny that my accountant has told me was of personal benefit. Every penny that was in support of the association or the party is out there and there for the party, and every penny of taxpayer dollars that we are accountable for is there as well.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a question to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Yesterday he made some outrageously erroneous comments here in the Legislature. He said he was going to have to deal with the chair of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario to put sanctions against employees who sell to underage people. He tried to create the impression that the sale within the LCBO of liquor to underage people was somehow rampant and that an LCBO employee who does that is subject to a two-hour lecture. Then he proceeded to say he doesn't believe that that sanction is sufficient.

That's totally inaccurate. The minister may well have been referring to a two-hour video which is part of the intensive training program LCBO employees undergo. In fact, an LCBO employee who sells to an underage consumer can be fired, certainly will be reprimanded, indeed could be prosecuted. There's no motive for employees to do that, no incentive for them to sell to underage drinkers, in contrast to private liquor store owners, who are motivated by profit and want to sell as much as they can.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question, please.

Mr Kormos: I say the minister made this up to try to create a false impression that the phenomenon of sales to underage consumers was rampant. He's the one creating the crisis.

Please, Minister, tell us upon what data, what information you relied to propose to state in this House that there was the sale of liquor by LCBO employees to underage consumers?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the situation. As the member may know, in the past week I have had the flu, and as a result, yesterday morning I was informed by an assistant that we had received a report from the Coalition of Ontario Private Enterprise, which had done a study of our LCBO stores. I did not have an opportunity to read that report but was advised there was a significant problem with regard to the sale of alcohol to underage people.

I have forwarded that report to the chair of the Liquor Control Board for his review, as the results are alarming in that the report showed that when an 18-year-old,

through a private firm, went into some 45 different LCBO stores across this province, the age of that individual was only checked about a quarter of the time.

Mr Kormos: I spoke to the chair of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario around two and a half hours ago, and the chair of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario told me it would be the rarest of occasions when an underage consumer was sold liquor, and that would be in the case where in good faith an employee of the LCBO relied upon the appearance of somebody as clearly being far more mature than that person was.

The minister went one further, because the minister said, "In West Virginia, which has gone to a privatization scheme"—the minister was down there a little while ago, travelling about—"the degree of social responsibility has improved under the private system," as demonstrated in West Virginia. This is all part of his zeal, you see, to sell off a very profitable and a very socially responsible liquor distribution system.

Once again I ask the minister, upon what data, what research, what analysis does he base his comment that in the privatized West Virginia scheme, the degree of social responsibility has improved?

Hon Mr Sterling: I base that on a personal conversation with the chair of the liquor board of West Virginia.

Mr Kormos: The fact is, there is no study; there has been no collection of data in West Virginia to demonstrate any increase in social responsibility. But there are data that demonstrate that West Virginia, adjacent to the state of Pennsylvania, which has a controlled liquor sale and distribution system, after privatization has a driving-under-the-influence rate by minors, by people under age, four times that of Pennsylvania. There are data that indicate that, federally collected data. There are data to indicate that Pennsylvania's percentage of persons who are 21 years of age arrested for driving under the influence is in itself significantly lower than in the neighbouring uncontrolled jurisdiction of West Virginia.

In view of that, in view of the clear illustration that the privatized system in West Virginia is indeed promoting the sale of alcohol to minors, to underage persons, will this minister now please acknowledge that he made up what he said yesterday, that it's all hokey, it's all designed to generate a passion for selling off one of the most profitable resources that this province has? Indeed, as a result of his visit to West Virginia, the minister seems to be merely whistling Dixie.

Hon Mr Sterling: We have, as I said, not made any decisions with regard to privatization. However, I was very, very much concerned with the research report, which I was informed about yesterday, which indicated that when our LCBO stores were tested across this province, they failed the test. Only 25% of them asked an 18-year-old for their age of majority card; 75% failed. Therefore, I was very concerned about that yesterday, and I continue to be concerned about it, whether or not we privatize the LCBO. Therefore, I have asked Mr Brandt to come back to me with an answer as to how he's going to address this particular problem.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, yesterday in this House you said, "The real

question is, can we do better than the present system?" Then you further commented, "I believe we can, either through improving the existing system or changing the present system."

Well, today the Ontario liquor board employees' union, as I suggested yesterday they could, have told you that they can see many stores which could improve services in smaller communities and city neighbourhoods, LCBO kiosks and other host businesses, Sunday openings, which have municipal approval.

Minister, you're the boss, you're the chief honcho, and I've said you're the most powerful minister in cabinet. Why aren't you moving to improve the present system? Why are you even considering abandoning the LCBO before you move to improve the present system and you can do all these improvements you want tomorrow? Why not? Why not just say the word, Minister?

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Hon Mr Sterling: The issues you mentioned are complex and require discussion, and there is of course a difference of opinion as to whether they would increase the efficiency of the system and maintain the same amount of revenue to our treasury. That is a very important consideration for this government. We will be considering all these issues when we are looking at whether we are going to privatize this particular function of government. That has not been done, and hopefully we're going to do that in the very near future.

Mr Crozier: Might I remind the minister that in the 1995 Financial Post's 500 standings, the LCBO is first in return on invested capital; second in return on shareholders' equity, only after the SAQ in Quebec; second in net income for crown agencies, only after Hydro-Québec; fourth in profit margin; fifth most profitable net income; and is the 68th largest business organization in the country.

Minister, they already bring, this year, \$680 million to the provincial treasury. Those are non-tax dollars. You don't have to go out and raise taxes if the revenue doesn't come in for that kind of thing. It's been suggested, Minister, why take risk capital that's available for other things out of the system just so they can buy an organization that's already bringing you all kinds of revenue.

The Solicitor General, I think, was rather cool to your suggestion yesterday. He's likely aware that in the United States—and the figures were given here just a minute ago—in Pennsylvania, which is controlled, a neighbouring state to your favourite state of West Virginia, the per 100,000 arrests were 1,000 per 100,000. In West Virginia, your favourite state, it was 5,000 arrests for underage driving.

The Speaker: Put your question.

Mr Crozier: The LCBO last year questioned 285,000 customers and turned away 58. Minister, don't you think it really is time to move on to something more important, more constructive in this province, and—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Sterling: I don't know where to start in terms of answering about a thousand different questions that were put forward. The LCBO is a significant contributor, and I think the present chairman is doing a very good job

in trying to bring the LCBO into line. But I want to indicate to the member opposite that the LCBO happens to be the biggest liquor monopoly in the world. With the biggest liquor monopoly in the world, they should be producing more than \$700 million for the Treasurer and the taxpayers, the people of Ontario; they should be producing maybe \$800 million. That's what we're going to try to do in looking at the operation of this very valuable resource.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): It would be interesting to find what, if anything, that minister bases his responses on. In the absence of the Minister of Education and Training, I'd like to direct a question about the massive cuts in post-secondary education to the Premier.

The Premier will know that his government has slashed \$400 million from post-secondary education budgets across the province. It's caused enormous losses in faculty jobs across the province. You've approved tuition fees in colleges to increase by 15%; many university tuition fees will hike as high as 20%.

Today hundreds of students came to the Legislature, taking time away from their examinations, to voice their concerns about these irresponsible cuts to finance your tax cut. I'll be presenting the petition they brought to the Legislature to your office later today; because of the rules, we can't present it in here. But it reads in part, "That no college or university tuition fee increases or funding reduction be permitted until a study is completed and its recommendations are considered by Parliament."

Are you prepared to commit that there will not be tuition increases in the province or funding reductions until there is a thorough study of the impacts on the post-secondary education system in this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Yes, we will.

Mr Wildman: If you are prepared to have the study, can you indicate when this study will be completed? How can you explain your answer when already your government has given the green light to two universities to double tuition fees for dentistry students? How can you explain that answer when the tuition increases have already gone forward? How is it that we're going to have these kinds of tuition increases so that many, many students will not be able to afford to go to post-secondary education? Are you prepared to rescind that doubling of tuition fees for dentistry and to ensure that the entire cost of post-secondary education is funded from the public treasury in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: I find the member's question a tad strange. Here is a member of the New Democratic Party, one of the fastest tuition fee hikers in the history of governments here in the province of Ontario, now asking me to reverse all that, reverse tuition fees and put 100% of the cost of university and college tuition on to the taxpayer.

I know we were elected to undo a lot of damage you have done. There are a number of your policies we are changing so we can have more jobs and more growth and more prosperity here in the province of Ontario, but we did not campaign on cancelling tuition fees, having free

tuition and having 100% of the cost paid for by the taxpayers. We indicated and we supported your tuition fee increases provided that those dollars were going into education.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You just said no increases until the study. Are you going to stop them until the study is completed?

Interjection.

Ms Lankin: He just said it, Chris. It was his answer, not mine.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Etobicoke West and the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Hon Mr Harris: We made announcements, as you had indicated earlier, of some reductions for next year and announced some tuition fee increases. At the same time, we have said there will be no more tuition fee hikes, there will be no more reductions until such time as a full study of post-secondary education is completed. The minister will be making announcements on that shortly. Unfortunately, he's not in the House today. We do want to examine this.

We want to see the full income-contingent loan program, on which we now have agreement from the federal government, under way at the same time as there are any further increases. We believe the practice the former government had of hiking tuition fees without looking at the income-contingent loan plan was wrong. We'd like to look at this, we'd like to review it, but I want to be up front, as I was in the campaign: I believe students should pay their fair share through tuition fees, and we will continue to ask them to do that.

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VULNERABLE ADULTS

Mr John L. Parker (York East): My question is for my friend the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Spare us; we give up.

Mr Parker: I know this will be of interest to my honourable friends opposite. With the Advocacy Commission gone, where do vulnerable adults turn for help in trying to make themselves heard?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I thank the member for York East for that question. The majority of advocacy services are already being provided by community-based organizations, families, friends and service providers. These groups will continue to provide their services to vulnerable persons.

The \$3 million I announced today for our initiative will support and enhance the efforts of community-based organizations in a strategic and cost-effective manner. Almost all of these funds will be spent in the community. The commission's 1-800 line, 1-800-665-9092, is being maintained as a bridge until a community-based information and referral system is in place.

Mr Parker: Madam Minister, I'm sure that my honourable friends will also want to know, how will the government ensure that vulnerable adults are protected against abuse and neglect?

Hon Ms Mushinski: I appreciate that very good question from my colleague the member for York East. The ministries of Community and Social Services, Health and the Solicitor General will require accessible processes to address the concerns of vulnerable adults and their families within provincially funded or operated institutions through service contracts and performance agreements. We will work with professional organizations, community groups and institutions to develop protocols for use by professionals. The ministries of Community and Social Services, Health and Solicitor General will develop safeguards in provincially funded or operated institutions.

All ministries will provide information pertaining to the provincial legislation regarding abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults, for example, the Nursing Homes Act, Long-Term Care Act, Regulated Health Professions Act and Substitute Decisions Act. Just to repeat the commission's 1-800 line, it is 1-800-665-9092.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Six months ago, on 3 October 1995, you very proudly pronounced in this place that your government was freezing Hydro rates in this province for a five-year period. Against that backdrop, hundreds of thousands of Ontario electrical consumers are wanting to know why it is that they are now getting electricity bills that are showing real increases.

Minister, how is it on the one hand you promised the people of Ontario there would be a freeze of Ontario Hydro rates—that statement you made on 3 October 1995—and now hundreds of thousands of Ontario electricity consumers are getting noticeable increases in their electricity bills for the same amount or less use?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank my colleague across the way for the question. What we did ask Ontario Hydro to do was to honour our request for a five-year freeze in rates. What we are able to ask as a government is Ontario Hydro to freeze their rates related to their wholesale rates. I believe 85% of the electricity is sold to municipal electrical utilities. They must, on top of that wholesale rate, charge their operating and distribution fees.

Mr Conway: I hope everyone listened, because let me repeat what the minister has said and what the government has done. Last October, the Harris government promised a rate freeze for five years, leaving the impression that rates would be frozen for everyone across the province. As the government caucus knows better than most people, what Ontario Hydro has now done is to offer a very substantial renovation of its rate structure.

What that is going to mean and what it is now meaning for hundreds of thousands of Ontario electricity consumers, hundreds of thousands of rural consumers and, yes, hundreds of thousands—probably millions—of Ontario's urban consumers is that their bills are going up. Hydro is restructuring its rates and the effect of that, as we speak, is that hundreds of thousands of people in both rural and urban Ontario are experiencing a noticeable increase in their electricity costs.

Will you table at your earliest convenience, this week or next, the changes Ontario Hydro is making to its rate structure and the impacts those changes in the rate structure will have on urban consumers in cities like Hamilton and on all those farmers and seasonable users who are phoning members of the Legislature and their local Hydro offices mad as hell because they believe you have either misled them or broken a promise?

Hon Mrs Elliott: The member opposite has questioned me frequently on Ontario Hydro. In each of his questions he frequently refers to how proud we are of Ontario Hydro and what an important investment we have to protect. Ontario Hydro is continuing to honour our request for a zero average rate freeze. As the largest public utility in the province of Ontario, they must have the flexibility to adjust their rates to be able to operate in an efficient manner and to begin to pay down a \$33-billion debt. The corporation is acting in a businesslike manner and is indeed honouring our request for a zero average rate freeze.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question as well is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. I have a very serious question for you today. As you know, on Monday night there was a leak of 1,000 litres of heavy water containing tritium at the Pickering nuclear power station. Hydro officials have admitted that the full effect will not be known for several days. I have here a briefing note from the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services that says the spill occurred between 9 pm on Monday and 3 am on Tuesday but that officials at the Ajax-Pickering water supply plant were only notified at 1 pm yesterday. At what point did you know about the spill and what actions did you take?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): The first thing I would like to say in response to the question is to assure the people who live in the area that as a result of that unfortunate spill of tritiated water at Pickering, testing has indicated that the water at the local treatment plants meets all acceptable Ontario water standards. Having said that, any incident of any nature is serious to us and we are concerned not only with reporting methods but how it is handled at the time.

The first organization to be notified of this was the Emergency Measures Organization. Notified as well were the medical officers of health, our action centre, the Atomic Energy Control Board and the Emergency Measures Organization. Our office was not notified for some time. We had a protocol put together in November 1995, and I would agree with the member opposite that our office should have been notified sooner. It was not, and we have asked Ontario Hydro to remedy that in the future.

Ms Churley: There was a 10-hour delay between the spill and the water authorities being notified. As far as I know, anyway, as of 1:20 today the water intake pipes were still shut down. Obviously the medical officer of health has been concerned and is still concerned that there's a problem. Our staff have been told that Hydro's initial modelling showed a leak of 30,000 becquerels, a

level that would have been very, very high. Fortunately, luckily, this was a worst-case scenario, but at that time that's what the modelling showed.

But nobody called the Ajax-Pickering water supply plant until 10 hours later. That is the issue here. When water officials were finally told, they shut the plant's intake valves. This was at 1:15. What if those levels had been as high as the modelling suggested? What would you have told the member for Durham West about why you let potentially radioactive water slip into her constituents' drinking water? We know she's been getting calls because our office has been getting calls.

Minister, this could have been a very serious situation. I ask you again, what went wrong in the process? Did you know, when did you know, and what did you do about it?

Hon Mrs Elliott: According to the information we have received, the appropriate people were notified at the appropriate times. The tritium, however small—sampling indicated it was at 18 to 20 becquerels. The Ontario interim guideline for safe drinking water is 7,000 becquerels per litre.

1510

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): Recently I tabled a petition in the House concerning the intersection at Highway 6 and Twenty Road. The residents are very concerned about that intersection. It's very busy, it's on the way to Hamilton Airport, and they'd like some improvements made there. Can you please tell me the status of those improvements?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the honourable member for Hamilton West for her question and also for her interest in safety in the Hamilton-Wentworth area.

I am pleased to report that the ministry has been coordinating and discussing the required improvements with the town of Glenbrook and local communities. The proposed improvements are going to be a realignment and widening of Twenty Road to provide for a three-lane cross-section at the intersection, pavement resurfacing and upgrading of the guard-rails. Provisions to accommodate the future installation of signals is obviously the end result. The ministry has incorporated the intersection improvements into a larger project which we will get.

Mrs Ross: Mr Minister, can you please tell me when those improvements will take place?

Hon Mr Palladini: I would like to mention again to the honourable member that a public consultation session is planned later this year to present the ministry's design and receive public comments. We are preparing for construction at the very earliest opportunity. Once we have received environmental clearance and the property is made available, we will begin the project.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Mr Minister, I don't know if you're aware, but all over this province the price of gasoline is going through the

roof: in Elliot Lake, for instance, it is 68.9 cents; in Red Lake it's gone up to 71.4 cents; in the GTA it's gone up to 59.9 cents.

This skyrocketing of gas prices is making it very difficult for ordinary Ontarians to meet all the added costs which they face as ordinary taxpayers. On top of that, small business across Ontario finds this skyrocketing of gas prices almost the straw that's going to break the camel's back. In other words, we're going to lose all kinds of jobs in this province if this gouging with gasoline prices continues by the big oil companies.

As the minister in charge of jobs and economic development, at what point are you going to step in and protect the interests of jobs and ordinary Ontarians who are being gouged by the big oil companies?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): Of course my ministry is concerned about anything that might cause any difficulty as far as tourism is concerned, but I have to say to you that having—and I'm sure you have done this too—been to other provinces and other countries, that actually Ontario motorists enjoy the most competitive gasoline prices, I think, in the world.

The gasoline prices are a bit higher in northern Ontario because there are a number of factors in northern Ontario that create the higher cost and a little lower level of competition. As you know, the government does compensate northern motorists for the highest costs by forgoing registration fees for vehicles. I think, when you consider, that we in this province have much to be thankful for as far as—if you're in the tourist business, you will find that the price of gasoline is not a deterrent to our tourist industry.

Mr Colle: My concern is not just about tourism and it's not just about northern Ontario. I don't know if the minister realizes, but over the last month the price of gas has gone up 10% per litre and it's not just affecting tourists. There are all kinds of businesses that rely on affordable fuel to run their business and keep people working. How many more months of increases will it take before you will say something or do something to protect all businesses in Ontario who are basically being jeopardized by these increases?

I'm not talking about the differential between the north and the south because all over Ontario there's been, as I said, a dramatic 10% increase over the last month. What happens if there's another 10%? Never mind tourism, we're going to lose all kinds of companies who are right now on the edge. What are you going to do to ensure that these companies, the oil companies and their gouging, don't put people out of work?

Hon Mr Saunderson: To the member for Oakwood, I'm glad he mentioned the words "small business" because I want to tell him a little bit about what we are doing to help small business. You know that very shortly we are going to reduce the personal income tax rate and that is going to be a big help to small business.

We don't want to keep up with the tax increases we put up with from your party and that party there over the last 10 years. I don't know how many times we have to come back and tell you the real story about what creates jobs: that's creating the right business climate and that's

what creates jobs, and it always will. That's what we're doing.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources. In February 1995 your leader, now the Premier, told the Kenora District Municipal Association that the Conservative Party would restore the reputation of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and he said in particular, and I quote: "In the past 10 years it"—the MNR—"has been reduced to a shambles of what it used to be." Last Thursday, Minister, your Conservative government gutted the Ministry of Natural Resources. The budget is being chopped by \$137 million and you are laying off 2,100 staff. That represents 20% of all the layoffs across the public service.

Minister, you are closing down 20 MNR facilities in northern Ontario in small communities where there will be a very serious impact. I want to ask you today, how many of those 2,100 positions to be lost will be eliminated in northern Ontario and what will the impact be in our small communities?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member of the third party for the question. I think when the Premier spoke back in February 1995, and our party committed to regain the status of the MNR, we were talking more in terms of pride in bringing it back to its position of prominence as one of the best ministries in the Ontario government. I think, if you take a look at our reorganization and the announcements last week, you will see that this ministry once again retained its role of leadership.

I do want, though, to clear up some things in answer specifically to your question. Of the reductions, of the 2,175, that's from a base of over 7,000 in 1991. It will be reduced to a ministry base of 4,691. This reduction is based on the function of the ministry. We've built business cases, including the parks, forest management, fish and wildlife. The parks will have revenue retention. This is very positive news for the north.

Of the total staffing in the MNR, as the NDP would know, 50% is in northern Ontario, 50% in southern Ontario. If you take a look at the reductions of the 2,175, 55% of those reductions occurred in southern Ontario, 45% in northern Ontario. So if you say I'm favouring northern Ontario, I'm guilty, but it's based on function.

If you take a look at the reductions on the front-line services, it's based on solid business planning. I'd be pleased to go into more detail on this at a future date.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, I rise today on a point of order relating to a series of incidents which occurred in the Legislature last Thursday afternoon. I will be as brief as possible.

Last Thursday, this Legislature proceeded to an order of the day which had not been called by the government House leader or any minister of the crown standing in his or her place. If you will review Hansard—and I can say that I reviewed Hansard, both the written Hansard and the

video Hansard, in reviewing whether or not proper procedures had been followed—you will have to reach the same conclusion.

Standing order 54 is very clear: "Except as otherwise provided in these standing orders, government business will be taken up in the discretion of the government House leader or a minister acting in his or her place."

You insisted last Thursday in the House that debate on the second order, resumed debate on Bill 34, was under way, yet if you review Hansard, you will discover that the second order was called by you, not a minister of the government, not a minister of the crown. Obviously, this is of grave concern to all opposition members of the Legislature.

In the sixth edition of Beauchesne, this point is made very clear: "It is one of the fundamental principles of parliamentary procedure that when nothing is done respecting an order of business, it is struck out and cannot make further progress until the procedure regulating its passage has been regulated by the House. Neither the Speaker nor any officer of the House have the power to move it forward."

We would certainly concur with Beauchesne. Having the Speaker determine which order is government business in the Legislature is not just out of order; it is very unsettling.

I respectfully suggest that you have no choice but to rule that the debate which occurred last Thursday on Bill 34 was out of order. Once that ruling is made, I believe you will agree that upon resumption of the debate, my colleague the member for Algoma has the floor.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The House will recess for five minutes and I will come back with a decision.

The House recessed from 1524 to 1531.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the members that whether Hansard has recorded the calling of the government order by a minister or whether the calling is recorded or not on electronic Hansard is not the issue here. I can assure the honourable member that I remember very clearly the order being called by the House leader of the government, Mr Eves, before the commencement of the points of order. Further, immediately before the table officers read the order, the honourable minister without portfolio, the member for Burlington South, again called the order. Therefore, this debate had commenced and the member for St Catharines-Brock had the floor. That's the end of the ruling.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If it is not recorded in Hansard and it is not recorded on the electronic Hansard—and this is often, as I say, last week—then outside of our memories, how are we to know that is the case? My own recollection is that I don't recall a minister being recognized. You mentioned the member for Burlington South. I don't recall his being recognized. I think he may have interjected from the sideline, but I can't recall that he was actually recognized to call the order. That was my recollection. I wonder, when it's not recorded—I heard the government House leader say it's never recorded—in Hansard or in the electronic Hansard, how do we determine whether it happened or not, especially when it was like last week?

The Speaker: My information is that Votes and Proceedings is the official Hansard and apparently I distinctly remember the House leader calling the order.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's very difficult because I know I'm not in a position to appeal your ruling. I guess what I want to appeal to you here is for you to think again about your recollection, because I sat here through that entire period as well and was one of the people who rose on a point of order which interrupted the House leader from proceeding with calling orders of the day. He was never recognized and never called orders of the day, although he valiantly tried. I must indicate that the continuing number of points of order that were arising on this side of the House pre-empted the government from calling the orders of the day at that point in time.

I'm finding it very difficult to accept a ruling based on your recollection when there is absolutely no record in Hansard and where the clear recollection of the members in the House and the whole point, if I may say, at the point in time of the issues being raised under points of order was to prevent the government to get to calling orders of the day and proceeding with the debate on that bill for a number of reasons, in terms of what was going on in the House. Quite frankly, it amazes me that today you have a recollection that something absolutely different happened.

May I also say that you proceeded to go on when you indicated that you were going to accept that an order had been called, in absent—we would put—of it having been called, to recognize a member of the government back bench to proceed with the debate, when at that time, if you were proceeding with that order and you were proceeding with debate, it should have properly come back to our party and our leader who had the floor at that time. You never looked to our party, you never looked for that member, you never looked to proceed with that individual.

But I want to come back to the original point, which is that we were all very clearly at that point in time listening and watching and attempting to stop the government from actually being able to call the point of order, which we did successfully, until now. Your recollection somehow is reinterpreting what happened that day, and quite frankly, I think this is a very serious issue and I think that if you cannot rely on the Hansards here, you should at least go back and review the electronic Hansard and the tapes and the video, because you will find at no point in time was a government minister recognized and able to place a call for the orders of the day.

Mr Cooke: Mr Speaker, on that exact last point, I reviewed the video. In order for a cabinet minister or an acting House leader to call the order, you would have to have recognized that person. You can't just have an acting House leader yelling out what the order is to be called and then say you recognize that. But I watched the video; I watched it twice. You never once recognized the individual who was the acting House leader.

Mr Speaker, I understand the desire to be able to proceed, but on occasion you would really reinforce the confidence that all of us would want to have in a Speaker by recognizing that a mistake was made last Thursday

and that as a result of that mistake, Bill 34 was not called that day.

I watched the video. You are wrong. You are dead wrong. It is black and white. I don't think it is fair that you are ruling the way you are ruling this afternoon when the evidence is absolutely clear.

The Speaker: I must repeat again that I did hear the honourable member and I called orders of the day.

Mr Cooke: Did you recognize him? That's the question.

The Speaker: I called for orders of the day.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The end of the debate.

Petitions. The member for Downsview.

Mr Cooke: That does it, Al. No credibility at all. He wasn't recognized at all and you know it. Why don't you just wear your PC cap on your head?

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Cooke: Absolutely ridiculous. There was nobody recognized at all. Talk about bias, absolute bias.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): You want this place to function, do you? You want better decorum in this place, don't you? You have a funny way of getting it, I'll tell you that.

The Speaker: The member for Downsview has the floor.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FINANCING

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I rise today to read a petition to the Parliament of Ontario which is signed by a number of Ontario residents, duplicating the language of an earlier petition signed by 15,000 people which was refused entry, and it reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has announced its intention to reduce provincial grants to primary and secondary education by 10%, colleges by 13% and universities by more than 15% in fiscal 1996-97; and

"This reduction in provincial funding will cause increased class sizes at all levels of education, massive increases in college and university tuition fees and decreased quality of education because of fewer program and course offerings at all levels of education and reduction of teachers, staff, library resources and services; and

"This funding reduction will decrease accessibility to our colleges and universities for the children of working-class and middle-class Ontarians; and

"Education is essential to a civilized society and a productive economy;

"We, the undersigned, petition this Parliament to reverse the decisions made by the present government as to the funding reductions in primary, secondary and post-secondary education announced in the statement by Finance Minister Mr Ernie Eves, QC, MPP, on November 29, 1995; and

"That this Parliament examine through public hearings all aspects of the post-secondary education system in the province of Ontario; and

"That no college or university tuition fee increases or funding reductions be permitted until this study is completed and its recommendations are considered by this Parliament; and

"Finally, that this Parliament declare by means of resolution that education is common sense."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Further petitions?

ADJOURNMENT MOTION

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, I think you need 30 minutes to go look at the tape. I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Mr Cooke has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1540 to 1610.

The Speaker: Will the members take their seats, please.

All those in favour of Mr Cooke's motion will please rise and remain standing. Be seated.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 18; the nays are 61.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost. Petitions?

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES REGIONAL OFFICE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): "Whereas on April 11, 1996, we were advised by the Ministry of Natural Resources of the government's announcement of a major restructuring which is based on bringing a more business-like approach to government and includes a number of cost-saving measures to bring greater efficiency" to the program; and

"Whereas, as part of this major restructuring, it is the intention of the government to relocate the regional offices of the Ministry of Natural Resources from Cochrane to the city of Timmins; and

"Whereas this initiative will result in loss of approximately 42 positions, and more than \$2 million worth of annual income from our community of 4,500 people, before taking into consideration the impacts on the service sector and other ministries that are being restructured; and

"Whereas the closure of the Ministry of Natural Resources regional offices in Cochrane will not only have a devastating impact on the local economy but will also affect the continuing viability of the town of Cochrane;

"Now therefore be it resolved that the municipal council of the corporation of the town of Cochrane expresses its profound objection to the government's proposal to relocate the Ministry of Natural Resources regional offices" out of Cochrane "and requests that an

impact analysis study be conducted prior to the relocation of the ministry positions from the town of Cochrane; and

"Be it further resolved that this resolution be forwarded to the Honourable Mike Harris, Premier of Ontario, and the Honourable Chris Hodgson, Minister of Natural Resources and of Northern Development and Mines...and to all the municipalities within the district of Cochrane."

I affix my name to the petition.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I have a petition signed here by the secondary school teachers of Lennox and Addington.

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7, and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote, we, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government pushed through Bill 26, which invades the privacy rights of all Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for more extensive public hearings to defeat this bill and restore the privacy of all Ontarians."

That's signed by 535 constituents.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mrs Janet Ecker (Durham West): I rise today to present a petition that was given to me on behalf of several of my constituents. It outlines their concerns about Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers.

Interjection: Read it.

Mrs Ecker: I don't need to read it, because it has just been read by my colleague to my immediate right.

I respect the opinion of my constituents and I will table this and affix my signature.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care funding; and

"Whereas in the 1995 election campaign, the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government'"—

Interjection: Not one cent.

Mr Agostino: That's right, not one cent—"and calling this their first and most important commitment;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton health task force as related to any hospital closures in Hamilton-Wentworth, in particular St Joseph's Hospital, 50 Charlton Avenue East."

I affix my signature to the petition.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions from UFCW Local 1000A over the signature of Dan Gilbert.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits; excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational disease; eliminating pension supplements, handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT, including eliminating worker representation on the board; and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"We therefore demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeals structure with worker representation and that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I show my support by adding my name to theirs.

ST MARY'S FAMILY LEARNING CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My petition regards the maintenance of funding to St Mary's Family Learning Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Windsor and Essex county, Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the following:

"Whereas St Mary's Family Learning Centre of Windsor Inc, being funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (child care dollars) provides support

and educational opportunities for parents, home child care providers and resources for licensed child care centres to approximately 500 adults and 2,000 children;

"Whereas St Mary's Family Learning Centre of Windsor Inc relies on donations, user fees and volunteerism as well as Ministry of Community and Social Services funding to provide current services;

"Whereas only 3% of the total Ministry of Community and Social Services child care budget is spent on family resource programs such as St Mary's Family Learning Centre to support families who choose home child care as an option;

"Whereas all families pay taxes that support child care but a vast majority of the current child care budget is spent on licensed child care spaces that are used by only 8.5% of the children;

"Whereas the other 91.5% of families have few publicly funded services available to them;

"Therefore your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly to maintain funding to St Mary's Family Learning Centre."

I give it my support with my signature.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government plans to sell public housing,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to privatize public housing and allow for public hearings."

This has been signed by 287 constituents, and I affix my signature to the same.

1620

ST MARY'S FAMILY LEARNING CENTRE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): "We, the undersigned residents of Windsor and Essex county, Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the following:

"Whereas St Mary's Family Learning Centre of Windsor Inc, being funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (child care dollars) provides support and educational opportunities for parents, home child care providers and resources for licensed child care centres to approximately 500 adults and 2,000 children; and

"Whereas St Mary's Family Learning Centre of Windsor Inc relies on donations, user fees and volunteerism as well as Ministry of Community and Social Services funding to provide current services; and

"Whereas only 3% of the total Ministry of Community and Social Services child care budget is spent on family resource programs such as St Mary's Family Learning Centre to support families who choose home child care as an option; and

"Whereas all families pay taxes that support child care but a vast majority of the current child care budget is spent on licensed child care spaces that are used by only 8.5% of children; and

"Whereas the other 91.5% of families have few publicly funded services available to them;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly to maintain funding to St Mary's Family Learning Centre."

I, along with hundreds of my fellow citizens, affix my signature to this petition.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the assembly and the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of this efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of the St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I show my support by adding my name.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition signed by a number of Ontario residents. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed as quickly as possible with legislation to reduce our provincial tax rates as promised during the last provincial election, and we call on all members of the Parliament of Ontario to support the government in its promise to reduce provincial income tax rates in Ontario."

I have affixed my name to that petition.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we believe that the family support plan is a viable and necessary service provided by the government of Ontario,

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the proposed centralization of the family support plan will have a negative impact on the children who are supported under this plan and should be cancelled."

I affix my name to it, as I believe in it.

HEALTH CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): "To the Legislative Assembly:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to withdraw Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1995.

"We object to the bill because it terminates the partnership between the government and the physicians to manage health care on a joint basis; gives unilateral power to the Minister of Health to make cuts and dictate medical practice. This is not good medicine for our health care."

There are 249 signatures here, and I have affixed my signature to the same.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by several residents of the Niagara Peninsula that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of products to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and clients;

"Therefore be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I'm in agreement with its contents.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Smith from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presented the committee's report which was read as follows and adopted:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr50, An Act respecting the Town of Milton

Bill Pr53, An Act respecting the Association of Ontario Road Superintendents

Bill Pr56, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Election Act / Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Just very briefly, this bill will allow the use of last June's voters' list for the York South by-election. This avoids the expense of enumerating voters for the second time in less than a year. The chief election officer has estimated the cost of a new enumeration for that one riding would be in the neighbourhood of \$55,000.

I might add that this bill parallels what is in use in the federal House of Parliament. It also gives residents of the riding a new right to get themselves on the voters' list on the day of the election at the polling station. Under the current act, people have to go to the returning office before election day to do this. This new flexibility would minimize any possible inconvenience in using an 11-month-old voters' list. I am pleased to say that members of the other parties have indicated they support this piece of legislation, and we look forward to its speedy passage.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for St Catharines-Brock has the floor. In his absence, the Chair recognizes the member for Sudbury.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I look forward to spending the next little while outlining some of my views on Bill 34. It's a bill entitled An Act to amend the Education Act, in order to implement their \$400-million reduction in transfer payments to school boards. In fact, what it does is not only trim administrative fat, it alters education in Ontario drastically and forever. It will take years for the people of Ontario, the children of Ontario, and the students of Ontario to recover from the damage that's going to be done by Bill 34.

Let me outline for a little while why we shouldn't be doing this, even though the government is bent on ensuring that their 30% tax cut is on the backs of Ontario students. Let me outline a few reasons why we shouldn't be doing this.

We have much to be proud of in our system of education. The last comprehensive survey done for parents with regard to education in Ontario was done by the previous government, by the then Minister of Education, whose results were indicative of indeed how the people of Ontario are thinking, were thinking and continue to think education is in Ontario.

1630

We found out early in the studies that there was an 84% secondary school graduation rate in the province of Ontario. That was higher than the Canadian average of 82%. We found out that post-secondary education

participation rate was 50% in Ontario, 10% higher than the Canadian average of 40%.

Contrary to what the now Minister of Education would have you believe, that Ontario spends the greatest amount of dollars per pupil to educate students, in reality, Ontario's per-pupil expenditure is sixth in Canada after the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba. Despite claims that our educational costs are the highest in the world, in actuality, 28 neighbouring US states spend more than Ontario does on a per-pupil basis and we are in the mid-range of educational expenditure on a per-pupil basis.

Most importantly, the survey found that the partners in education, the primary educators, the parents, are very satisfied with the quality of education in Ontario. In this survey commissioned by the Minister of Education, there was a 70% compliance rate on the part of parents that Ontario's schools are excellent or good, a 90% rate of parents surveyed said they had regular contact with their child's elementary teacher, and there was a 77% rate stating there was good communication between the secondary school panel of teachers and secondary school teachers and parents. When surveyed about the quality of their child's education, 70% rated the quality as being either excellent or good.

This was the last valid, comprehensive survey of parents conducted by the Ministry of Education, but what does it mean? What do all these numbers mean? Quite simply, it means our educational system is far better than the Minister of Education would have the public believe. He has created, or has tried to create a crisis of community and parental dissatisfaction towards teachers and the educational system, but he hasn't been successful. It's been to no avail. Parents, the public, by and large value the educational system we have presently, and are fearful.

There were three instances in the survey that parents were concerned about, the first being the quality of education based on expenditures in education. In other words, the people of Ontario, the parents of Ontario's students, do not want \$400 million withdrawn out of this bill, Bill 34; they do not want an addition \$337 million withdrawn from the business plan which was filed by the minister last week.

The same survey indicated there was a 77% approval rating for the way teachers are assessing students' performance, a 75% approval rating for teachers' professional abilities to listen to parental concerns and respond to them, and a 73% approval rating for the way teachers are meeting the needs of learners. The minister's attempt to create a crisis of confidence in the system will not be successful. These numbers indicate he is not being successful.

Well, then, what does Bill 34 do for education? First of all, it makes junior kindergarten, as we know it, a program of the past. It may not happen this year, but it's going to happen. Junior kindergarten programs, when they are category 3 in importance, as a local board option, will not be able to be afforded by local boards. So if it doesn't happen this year, it will happen next year. The junior kindergarten program, as we see it, as we've known it, will not exist in the future. This year of valuable learning, of social interaction and of indeed

readiness for future years of learning will be gone. All studies indicate that children who start in early education programs are better able to meet the demands placed on them as they progress in any educational system.

Senior kindergarten is, at best, on hold. It's in a holding pattern and those boards that were progressive enough to institute full-day kindergarten will certainly have to re-evaluate their priority of early childhood education. That's sad, because senior kindergarten, that most important year of reading and mathematical readiness for the primary and junior years, is so valuable to the student that increasing it on a full-day basis provided classroom teachers with the opportunity to develop a theme and carry it through to its entirety. Full-day kindergarten will be but a dream in the years to come. Senior kindergarten, half-time basis, certainly is in a holding pattern.

Let's talk for a second about specialty programs at the elementary level. Family studies, technical studies, guidance counselling, to mention but a few, are all gone. Family studies, gone; tech studies, gone; elementary guidance programs, gone. The weakest and the most vulnerable of our students will be the ones most tragically affected. If we look at the high school level, you can see now the direction for some boards. Because of the limitations being placed on those boards by this government with Bill 34, you will see basic level allocation, gone; resource allocation, gone; self-contained allocation, gone; special education allocation, gone; identified student allocation, gone; guidance allocation, gone; co-op education, gone.

Interjections.

Mr Bartolucci: A few members across the way think that might not be important, but when you're talking about those students who require extra assistance, you're talking about a basic level allocation that is extremely important for those students to get off the cycle of dependency. If you're looking at students who have reading difficulty, who suffer from a particular physical or mental handicap, your resource allocation is extremely important and you cannot treat it lightly and you cannot make it a part of the sacrifice you have to pay for a 30% tax cut.

There will be, no doubt, less time for special education and for classroom teachers to coordinate and to deliver the programs those individual students need, and for those specialized programs that are essential for those students who do not have average or above-average capabilities. They need specialized allocation. They need specialized programming. Do you know what? School boards will have to sacrifice that because there just won't be the money for it.

Let me tell you that gone will be the student assistants who are so vitally needed for the developmentally delayed children, the EMR students, for students experiencing severe academic and behaviour limitations. These students require specialties. They require not only the help of qualified, dedicated, well-trained staff, but also the help of trained assistants. School boards will just not be able to afford it. They will be gone as well, and gone will be the sensitivity which helped make Ontario's school system the envy of most jurisdictions. That

sensitivity is shown in so many different ways. It is shown mostly by the compassionate, caring approaches of those individuals who are involved with those children. They just won't be there for those children. Those children will be left alone and they will not survive the system. What this government promotes trying to do will in fact happen in the reverse and we will be increasing that level of dependency.

1640

For any of us who have had students go through a school system, we can forget the co-curricular activities. They won't survive the boards' axing that will have to be done, not because they want to do it but because they're forced by this government to do it. Gone will be extra-curricular programs. Forget your athletic program after school; it's not going to exist. Forget the drama clubs. Forget the science club. Forget the United Nations clubs that exist in many of the high schools. They just won't be there because there won't be the resources for them to be there.

Forget the enriched programs as well; they're gone.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): What does that mean?

Mr Bartolucci: Forget those students who are at the other end of the spectrum—the Chris Stockwells of the world, the gifted students, forget them. They're just not going to be able to get the assistance and the nurturing they require to develop to their full potential. Forget the outdoor education program; it's gone. Forget all those extracurricular activities that you feel your students benefited from, your children benefited from in elementary and secondary school, because they're gone, there's no question.

The sad reality of Bill 34 is that the so-called stated toolkit objectives will not be achieved. Ultimately, the exact opposite will occur.

Cuts as outlined in Bill 34 will produce a system akin to the United States system, enunciated so well in their document entitled *A Nation At Risk*. Why would we want to have what is considered to be a world-leading educational system go the way of the United States and become not a nation but a province at risk?

The long-term effects of Bill 34 will be a more expensive system. There will be more vandalism. There will be more dropouts. There will be increased violence and there will be deteriorating facilities. In fact, what you will have is a breakdown of the total system from the buildings, from the bricks and mortar to the minds of the children, a system that cannot be supported, nurtured or fostered by a provincial government without the sacrifices you're asking those students, those boards and the system in general to make for a 30% tax cut. There's absolutely no rationale behind it.

There are so many ways they're impacted upon through Bill 34. You will know that part of the savings was a freeze on capital projects. There's a letter here from the Sudbury District Roman Catholic Separate School Board that outlines how poorly thought out this reduction in educational expenditures is, and it says:

"Dear Minister:

"The recent announcement on the funding cuts in the order of \$400 million for elementary and secondary

education in Ontario includes a \$167-million freeze on capital projects. It is our understanding that a number of capital construction projects will be delayed. Our board of trustees strongly objects to the freeze placed on the construction of the final phase of l'école secondaire l'Horizon."

You have to understand, two thirds of the school is done, but the third phase will not be completed. Is it going to affect bricks and mortar of existing buildings? Absolutely. Phase 3 of this high school will not be completed. Obviously they want a meeting with the minister, and I would encourage him to meet with them as quickly as possible to try to have some resolution to this particular problem.

But let's decide and let's come to grips with what we will have left once Bill 34 is enacted. As proven by this letter that I just finished reading, you're going to have fewer classrooms. No question about that. You're going to have, obviously then, fewer schools. No question about that.

We see school boards all over Ontario closing down schools, schools that normally would not be closed, but they're forced to close schools to try to come to some type of resolution with the problem the minister has put in the hands of school boards. You're going to have obviously fewer teachers. You're going to have fewer young, creative, dynamic teachers. They're just not going to be in the system.

What are you going to have more of? You're going to have more double grades, you're going to have more triple grading. That's a reality in some parts of Ontario already and that's going to increase. You're going to have classrooms with grade 1, 2 and 3 students in them; grade 4, 5 and 6 students; grade 5, 6 and 7 students. It is ridiculous; it's the wrong approach to use.

Finally, you're going to have a system that we can say is now not the world leader, is not the system you would want your children to go through in the future, and the reason for it is the 30% tax cut.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I would like to commend the member on an outstanding contribution to the debate on Bill 34. He outlined many of the ramifications of the provisions of this bill, ramifications which will be felt right in the front line of education, that is, in the classroom.

I know there's a theory out there that somehow all we're dealing with is administrative matters, the so-called fat in education. Over the past few years there has been a concerted effort; as our colleagues from the New Democratic Party in their latter years were compelled to restrict funding to boards of education because of the economic circumstances, we found that much of the so-called fat that was in there was removed.

There's a theory out there that somehow there are layers and layers and layers of administration. If that were the case at one time, as I think the member has appropriately pointed out, that is not the issue at this time. We're now down to direct services to students.

I recognize there are always people who will make the case that if you make an investment now, the expenditure now, it will save you money later. That's often valid—it's not always valid, but it's often valid—and I think it

is in the case of education. He mentioned junior kindergarten, for instance, and I've said in this House on a number of occasions that if you'd asked me a dozen years ago whether junior kindergarten was a priority in terms of funding and education, I probably would have said it was not. I would change considerably that viewpoint today, because there have been so many independent objective and thoughtful studies which have been produced to show the real and genuine benefit to education and to our society that I think the member is appropriate in raising this issue in his speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further questions and comments? If not the member for Sudbury has two minutes.

Mr Bartolucci: Just let me tell you in my closing remarks, it's the hope of every teacher, it's the hope of every parent, and it should be the hope of every politician in Ontario that when a child comes to school, or when a student enters the school system at whatever level, the total child is educated. Teachers know the importance of not only educating the academic component of the child, but parents and teachers and politicians, at least at the local level, have known all along that the social aspect of child development is extremely important, the physical aspect is so important, the mental aspects and the academic. The total child must be considered when talking about education.

You can't do that if you have to sacrifice programs at the local level to comply with a ministry directive. It clearly makes no sense at all to send children to school, to a publicly funded system, when you know the product you're going to have to deliver to that student is inferior. That's never, ever been the intent of any provincial government in Ontario in the past. The intent was always to provide the best program, the most complete program and the most dedicated program for students in our system. Clearly, if Bill 34 is enacted, that will not be the case and the education of the students of Ontario will be damaged forever.

1650

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm quite happy to be here today to talk to the whole issue of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act. I want to begin by repeating some of the words the Minister of Education and Training said just the other day, because I agree with those remarks.

"Ontarians place a high value on education because they know it's an essential part of plans to restore jobs and prosperity to our province. Since 1990, nearly all new jobs in Ontario have gone to workers with post-secondary education and training. The emerging information-based economy will put an even greater premium on learning. In increasingly competitive world markets, high-paying, productive jobs for Ontario will be available only if people are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills."

Then he goes on to say, "The need to maintain and improve quality education programming while bringing our spending to a more suitable level is clear."

I agreed with literally everything he said except the last comment. We do put a high premium on education,

all of us do, but some of us say we do, and that's not good enough.

I want to expose some of the problems this government has introduced by way of this bill and give some background, generally speaking, around issues of education, so that once I get to Bill 34 and its constituent parts, people will have a better sense of what I'm getting at.

The minister brings together a toolkit, and the toolkit really is nothing more than cutting in education. That's really what this bill is all about. It's a toolkit that continually cuts into education funding. Does this bill, as a tool, offer any help to teachers? It doesn't. Does this bill, as a tool, help the teachers in the classrooms? It doesn't. Does it improve the teaching methodology that teachers use in the classrooms so that they're able to reach students more effectively? It doesn't do that. Does it address the issue of hunger and how it affects learning in the classroom? It doesn't do that. Does it address the issue of poverty in the classroom and how that affects learning and how that affects equality of opportunity, as many people like to speak about? It doesn't do that at all.

In fact, this bill merely cuts away at educational funding and therefore contradicts the stated purpose the Minister of Education spoke about when he said the need to maintain and improve quality education programming is important.

How does he do that when he's cutting \$400 million now and \$400 million from before, which, when annualized, as our leader has said, amounts to \$1 billion? How does it help education, teachers, students and parents? And how does it bring about educational equality, equality of access and equality of opportunity? It doesn't do that. It does not do that in any way whatsoever.

This government uses the figure Mr Sweeney has offered, and they like to say there's plenty of room to cut because 47% of what is spent in education, he says and the Conservatives agree fully, it seems, is for non-classroom purposes.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): You hired him.

Mr Marchese: That's fine. We hire people to do studies. Of course we don't always agree with everything written by people we hire to do things. I'm sure you'll agree with that.

But when he says the 47% is money that can be cut because it doesn't affect the classroom, he is wrong and all of you are wrong in supporting it and promoting that view. I'll explain why.

How do department heads of history, of English, of geography, become people you could easily cut, when they're classroom teachers? How do vice-principals, who have a great deal of administrative work in the classroom dealing with students and teachers and parents, become either redundant or something you can cut? How do principals, who are included in this 47%, become redundant or people you can cut when they have a whole school to administer? How do superintendents, who are counted in that figure, become redundant or people you can cut?

I would remind some of you that most boards of education have already done the cutting, reducing the number of superintendents they have in their boards as a

way of saving some money—at some cost, I would say, in some areas, because I think they play an important role. But they've cut superintendents already.

But you will continue to argue that maybe we should cut some more. All right; that's an argument. Whether you're going to arrive at a 47% figure is, I argue, wrong-headed. You can't get to 47% by cutting a few more superintendents. But let's say you can cut a few more in some boards where they have already done so. Let's say you could do that.

But you also have visiting artists in many school boards who are invited in and, yes, are paid a nominal fee to come and work with students in the classroom where the arts are taught. Would you argue that is a redundant kind of activity going on in the classroom? I don't think you would do that. But they're part of the 47% figure. They enrich the classroom as artists. Surely you wouldn't be saying it's something that students don't need when the direct experience of an artist contributes very much to the classroom.

Would you argue that social workers—and different boards have a number of different social workers, of course. Would you say they're not directly linked to the classroom? If you do, I'm not sure how you would justify that social workers are not contributing to the education of the student and to the helping out of teachers where they are facing problems in the classroom. I suppose some of you might argue that. But social workers, psychiatrists where they're used or where their services are bought, are people who make a direct contribution to the education of the student and help the teacher out as they teach students.

There are many other facets perhaps one could speak to and/or of as areas where people might say you can cut, but I suggest to you that all the activities I mentioned, which many of you perhaps didn't even know existed, are directly connected to the classroom. If you cut in those areas of secretaries, of principals, of visiting artists, of social workers, of educational assistants, of whom many boards have many who directly help the classroom teacher in special education in particular; if you cut such workers, you are hurting the education of the student and you are making the job of the teacher much more impossible to do. But that's what some of you are suggesting, and I've heard a number of you say this. I've heard a number of my friends across the way say this in the debate last week.

1700

Mr Stockwell said last week that we have 47% of educational funding that's non-classroom-related, and I was telling you and others who were listening that's not in fact the case.

Mr Stockwell: I didn't say that.

Mr Marchese: Yes, you did.

Mr Stockwell: Sweeney said that.

Mr Marchese: No, I know Sweeney said that, but some of my friends across the way—and I don't have too many—said the same thing as well. I'm suggesting to you that all of that support connects to education, to the classroom, to the teacher, to the students and to the parents.

But let me get on to the issue of junior kindergarten, because it's in the act. The previous speaker made some

important points about junior kindergarten, and I want to be able to talk a little more about the need for junior kindergarten.

Junior kindergarten is important for a variety of reasons. As some of you know, students come into the classroom unequal. Many of you argue that's not true, that they all come in equally. But I argue that students come with varying degrees of professional experience that make some students better prepared to do better in the junior kindergarten year, senior kindergarten, grade 1 and so on. The argument is that students do not have the same educational conditions that provide for equal educational opportunities, so some people are going to have a better start than others.

Just as an example so that people might understand a little more clearly, if you come from a home where dad is a professor or mom is a professor, mom or dad is a doctor, or someone in the family, a parent or both parents, has a BA, an honours BA, an MA and so on, you are more likely to have a head start as a child in that family than a student who doesn't have that professional background. What that means is that student has a head start. When he gets to senior kindergarten or grade 1, he has a head start. That child who comes from that professional background—Madam Speaker, if I could just discourage some crossway dialogue, it would be easier for me to hear myself.

The Acting Speaker: Perhaps I would encourage you to direct your comments to the Chair as well. That might help.

Mr Marchese: I understand that, Madam Chair, but if you could just address my need, I would find that helpful.

The Acting Speaker: I'll endeavour to do that, member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Thank you. And I'm always addressing my comments through the Speaker, of course.

Mr Stockwell: Me, me, me. That's all you think about.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke West, you're completely out of order. You're out of your seat.

Mr Marchese: In fact, I was referring to my good friend from Etobicoke West who loves to intervene in the discussion, not just with me but with others. I need his full attention.

Mr Stockwell: That's impossible.

Mr Marchese: Thank you.

The point is that if you come from a professional background you have a head start, and if you don't have that background you don't have the head start, you're behind, so the conditions are not equal for students. So why do we argue we need JK? We argue that it's needed in order to equalize the experiences for that student in JK so they have an equal basis to proceed, as with the other students who have a head start.

Those who are well-to-do don't really care about a JK program because they first of all will do well, but they can afford a private school, a private child care service for their children. They can afford that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: But, Chris, it's true. If you're wealthy you can afford a program for your child. If you're not wealthy you don't have one. It's true. Right? That's a

fact. If you don't have the economic means, that means your child won't have the same benefits, won't have the same opportunities and you're not equalizing the conditions.

For the wealthy it's not a problem. In fact, the wealthy will argue, "This is a child care program; it's not an educational program," and that's where we disagree. We say it is an educational program to bring about greater equality for all people and for all students of all classes and all ethnic backgrounds.

So what you are doing here—

Mr Stockwell: Who's got the money?

Mr Marchese: Who's got the money? We argue if you don't spend now, you will spend later. It's proven by all of the educational learning I have had as a teacher and as a trustee and all the years that I've read into the field—

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): As a parent.

Mr Marchese: As a parent as well—that when you spend money in the early years, you are creating—

The Acting Speaker: Do you want to take a seat just for a minute. The member for Etobicoke West, you are out of your seat.

Mr Stockwell: I was helping him.

The Acting Speaker: As you know, interjections are not allowed anyway, but if you continue to interject I'm going to request that you please take your seat. You have that choice. I'm giving you that choice.

Go ahead, member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: What we are doing by doing this is continuing the inequality among people. You are continuing to make sure that some of the students will never have the same head start. That's what you're saying and that's what you're doing through this bill.

It is an important socialization period for students because when they get into that classroom in JK, or earlier on as we should be doing, those students are much better prepared socially and academically, intellectually to deal with the work of the classroom. That's an undisputed fact in all the research that has been done. You might not know if you haven't done the reading or the research, but the research proves differently.

The point of making the program optional, as all of you know, is that when you make it optional some boards will do it and most boards will not. Some examples of the boards that are not doing it are Brant, Dufferin, Durham, Grey, Haldimand, Haliburton, Halton, Hastings, Lincoln, Niagara South, Norfolk, Peel, Perth, Peterborough, Prince Edward, Simcoe, Waterloo, Wellington, Wentworth and York region. These boards are not implementing that program.

What you will have is an uneven implementation of JK, where some boards will have it and some will not. What it means as well is that some boards which are Catholic might have it and the public board will not. What that encourages is a very unhealthy kind of competition between the boards where—

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Quorum, please. What Mr Marchese is saying is far too important not to be heard.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, proceed.

Mr Marchese: What you are encouraging by allowing some boards to do it and some boards not to is that you will contribute to an unhealthy competition between boards. In fact, what's happening in some of the boards is that they will switch their property tax assessment from Catholic to public or public to Catholic in order to get into the junior kindergarten program. Some of you look startled, as if you don't understand that. That's what it means. It's happening. Some boards are switching their assessment in order to get into a different board. That's a problem.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): Irresponsible.

Mr Marchese: It might be irresponsible, you add, but that's what happening. When you allow this to be optional, that's what happens, because you can't control it. What you have done is to eliminate universality, where these programs as JK are offered across the board, across Ontario, equally and to all.

By ending universality and making it optional, you're saying, "Some of you can do it, some of you cannot. Whatever competition there is between public and separate boards is too bad," and if some kids have a better head start than others in some boards and others do not, that's too bad as well; that's a choice boards make.

1710

I tell you, you're doing something quite unfair to most students, to most boards, where it should be offered universally to all so that all can have the benefit of that particular program, where it has been proven through the studies that JK, senior kindergarten and even earlier education, as they do in France, contribute to equality of condition and to equality of outcome. You're eliminating that. I'm saddened by that, but it's for the people of Ontario to judge your actions and all we can do is make the arguments.

In the bill, you also raise another matter which says school boards will be able to direct certain adult persons to enrol in continuing education programs rather than in the day school program. I want to speak to that by making four or five points and I want to say this: You have already cut the rates for adult students of anyone who is over the age of 21 by half. Where you say that education is important, that there should be a continuum of education from the early years to the later years, you contradict that by cutting what normally would go to the school board to teach a student who's over 21 years old. You have given them a continuing education rate which is half of the rate they otherwise would have gotten. What it's saying is that the adult student doesn't have the same value as a student who's seven or eight and that we don't value continuing education by the mere fact that we cut their school board funding to half, by simply considering them as continuing education students.

Further, if some students can be in a high school at age 19, what happens if the program is five or seven years long in order to get their secondary school degree? What will you do at age 21? What happens to that student? This particular bill doesn't speak to that, and therefore questions like this become very complicated for adult students and for school boards and teachers who teach them. What happens to teachers if they are now teaching

in a regular day school as regular teachers if all of a sudden school boards decided that we're going to move away from regular school day teaching to continuing education? What would happen is that you would see an incredible loss of teachers. In Metro alone, there would be a loss of approximately 1,500 teachers if the Metro school board decided today or tomorrow or next year that we're no longer going to have day schools, we're going to have continuing education classroom study. You would lose a whole number of teachers.

Are there any guarantees—and you have not done this study at all—that if you move from day school into continuing education study that is done mostly at night, the students would actually end up going? We don't know that. We don't know whether you're discouraging adult students by doing such a thing. You haven't done that study and you should. If you care, as Minister Snobelen does, the Minister of Education, that we value educational opportunities, that we value education because it's an important element of whether you will have a job later on, if you do value that, then you're not giving these people an opportunity. You may in fact be losing.

Those students may be losing opportunities, but you haven't done that study because I don't think you've thought about that. Certainly, I don't think the government members have thought about that. I'm assuming some of the staff who have prepared this report have, but I'm not quite sure the government understands that.

What happens as well, as part of the implications of this particular component of the bill, in schools where we have a lot of adult students—in some of our Toronto schools, to speak of some of the ones I know best, in Parkdale we probably have 40% of students as adult students in their day school program. What would happen to their overall programming for all students if all of a sudden a whole bunch of those people were gone? You're affecting the regular school day program. Have you thought about that? Has the minister thought about that? Are the members asking themselves these questions? Do they care? Has the staff informed you of that? Do they care? I'm willing to admit that perhaps they do, but perhaps they haven't been told or asked about that. But you have to ask those questions. If you care about education, then you need to ask the effects that would have on the regular school, as a school in Parkdale, as Central Tech, as so many other schools in Toronto, as an example that we know best, where we have a lot of adult students.

In the York board in the Metropolitan school board area, York has a high percentage of adult students in its board. Have you thought about the effects, what that would do to that school board? I suggest you haven't thought about it. I suggest the consequences are rather severe, but you need to think about those things when you introduce bills. You cannot simply on faith assume that the minister knows what he's talking about, because in this particular instance, he does not.

I want to move further, because I've got five more minutes to make the comments as they relate to the issue of "School boards will be authorized to make equalization payments to the Minister of Finance." I love this one. It

makes it appear as if school boards are given the right to give money back. It makes it appear as if we're authorizing the board to give the rest of the province money back. It's not saying you are compelled. It's saying, "You, board, are authorized to give it back," but it makes it appear like we're doing them a favour.

We're not doing the boards a favour. We are hurting them and we are hurting them in a very serious way. You are hurting Metro in particular, you are hurting Ottawa, you will probably hurt Muskoka because, and I'm sure that most of you don't know this, Muskoka will be in the same boat as the Metropolitan board and the Ottawa board and many other boards, including possibly Hamilton and many other cities as well. Some of you have not thought about this, but the impact will be enormous on some of your constituents and some of your areas that you thought were not touched. Some of you, I suspect, think this only affects Metro and we can hurt Metro because everybody likes to hurt Toronto and Metro, but you're wrong. You will not just be hurting Metro, you'll be hurting some of the other areas in the west and in central Ontario as well.

This particular measure, number 4, will take a lot of money from Metro and Ottawa and other places, and we say it's wrong. It says that this money, after it's collected, will go to the Minister of Finance. Are there any guarantees and do you feel good about the guarantee that somehow once you've stolen, taken money from another board, to give it somewhere else, it will go to education? You have no guarantees about that. You should be asking those questions. You want to know whether those dollars will go to the educational system in other areas. But the fundamental point is that it's wrong to take money raised in one constituency, in one area, for the purpose of education, to take it away from those boards to give it somewhere else. It's wrong to do that.

I would suggest that some people are going to make the argument that it's illegal to do that and some boards will in fact advance that argument and will sue the province based on this. They argue, and I think correctly, that you cannot take money from a board that legitimately raises property taxes for the purposes of education for those constituents. I would be outraged.

Parents, taxpayers, in these jurisdictions should be angry that money is being taken away from me to give it to somewhere else. If you're genuinely concerned about equality, then simply do it through an income tax system, fund education through an income tax system. That's the correct thing to do.

I support this. I supported this while we were in government and I will always continue to support it. If you really, genuinely want to have equality, if you take money from income tax everybody is affected equally and that money is distributed equally across the board, across every part of the province.

1720

That's what you should do. But to take money from Metro and Ottawa, and the Muskokas very soon, and Hamilton, is wrong, because they raised those dollars for the purpose of education in those constituencies.

With this bill you are hurting children, teachers, classroom learning and all that is connected to education.

When you take \$1 billion from the educational system, contrary to what you promised—that there would be not one penny taken away from education—you are doing a disservice to yourselves, but you are hurting the classroom teacher, the students and those parents. You are contributing to the inequality that exists in society where children of poor families will continue to be poorer and poorer. That's what you're doing. This bill magnifies and enhances the inequality in education.

What the Minister of Education and Training says about education being important, vital and valuable for future jobs is contradicted, I argue, by everything you are proposing in this bill and by the \$1 billion you're taking out of the educational system. I hope the people of Ontario who are listening will call the minister and will call our offices to agree or disagree with me or the minister or this government.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bradley: I have a two-minute opportunity to comment on the speech. The part I want to make reference to, because I think it is important to this debate, is the part that mentioned this is a chance for us to provide some kind of equal opportunity in the province through the education system.

We cannot ensure the outcomes are going to be equal. That is something that will be decided by a number of factors. I think everyone, though, regardless of political philosophy, would agree that providing an equal opportunity is a goal we should set for ourselves so that people who may find themselves at the bottom rung of the economic ladder or people who have been disadvantaged for various reasons will have an opportunity, through our education system, to be able to compete, if I can use that word, with others within the society to play a meaningful role, to play a substantial role within our society. This can best be done with an appropriate investment in education at an early age.

If you think of it, throughout one's lifetime, since today it is said we will have four or five different jobs in our lifetime, it is an opportunity for people who have lost their job—many are dislocated in our society today—to be able to get back into the workforce. Many people are seeking that opportunity. This bill, unfortunately, while it may seek to solve certain problems, presents other problems. If we look at adult education in the secondary school system, we're seeing some substantial cutbacks there, and that is largely related to people who are trying to get back in the workforce, to upgrade their skills to be prepared to play a meaningful role in society and not be a financial burden to society. I think the member has appropriately identified that chance for us to provide equal opportunity within our system.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I too would like to reply to the comments of the member for Fort York. In the short time I've been here I always know I can count on him to give reasoned debate, and I think he's raised a number of questions here today that we should take very seriously.

In my estimation, if we are fortunate enough in life to have good health, then the second most, or it then becomes the first most, important thing is education. I think education, a broad, good education, makes better

citizens of us and consequently it affects every part of our community life. It affects us socially. I think better education in all aspects brings less crime and violence in our society. I don't think we can even risk taking a chance with education. Therefore, I think the member for Fort York's comments, and others', about junior kindergarten are valid.

I, as a parent, can speak with experience. This is one of the things that I can speak with some experience on. I know our two children—my wife Joan's and my two children—benefited greatly from the opportunity of early education.

Then we go to the other end of the spectrum and we speak of adult education. What we're saying to some of those who are presently enrolled in adult education is, we're not going to help you get yourself up, but what we are going to do perhaps is force you on to social assistance and put you out perhaps in some meaningless job. So we have to think seriously about the effects of any reduction in adult education as well.

Mr Kormos: I'm pleased to respond to the insights provided by Mr Marchese. I appreciate his observations, but I also want—and I know that several people today have asked why I'm wearing this pink ribbon.

Mr Bradley: Why are you wearing that?

Mr Kormos: It was given to me last night when I was at the Niagara South Board of Education in the company of a large number of students from Niagara South, from Welland High and Vocational School, from Welland Eastdale Secondary School, from Port Colborne High School. These young women and men have organized themselves in protest to the massive layoffs of teachers in their jurisdiction, Niagara South, and across the province. The pink ribbon? Well, because of the pink slips. Do you get it, Speaker? The pink slips, ergo a pink ribbon.

These young people know that what this government is doing is not building but destroying. These young people know that what this government is doing is not investing in them and their futures, but rather investing in an economy where wages are going to be lower and lower, where there's going to become greater disparity between the wealthiest and the rest, who are going to be the poor.

These young people know that they're being confronted by a government that is as insensitive and uncaring as any government could be. They're being confronted by a government that has no interest in their future, certainly no interest in the maintenance of a middle class, the type of people who, like so many people, through hard work and the opportunity to work, enabled themselves to own their own homes and send their kids on to colleges and universities. That's being taken away from them.

I'm proud of the students of Welland Eastdale Secondary School, of Welland High and Vocational School, of Centennial Secondary School, for their participation in this movement, for their pink ribbon campaign in protest of the pink slips that the boards have been forced to impose upon good teachers across the province, literally thousands of them. I think the best thing we can do for those young people is ensure that this bill is defeated.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? If not, the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I thank the members for St Catharines, Essex South and Welland-Thorold for their comments and would add several things.

First, as it relates to JK, this is what you're doing: You're not dealing with disadvantage, you're not dealing with poverty, you're not dealing with inequality, you're not contributing to equality of opportunity and you're not contributing towards the reduction of the conditions the students come into the classroom with. You are in fact enhancing the differences. You are creating a bigger gap between the rich and the poor by such measures. When you offer those programs to students who come from a background which is not as rich as some others, you are making it impossible for them to have the same educational opportunities, and I think what you have done through this action is wrong.

Secondly, adult education. Adult education has become an important component of learning in most school boards—not just in Metro, but most other boards. Your cuts in the funding, by half, that adult education students get is wrong. It's not helping those adults to get back into the classroom and it doesn't help those boards to be able to teach those adults in the way they wanted to.

Third, on the issue of metropolitan government being whacked by \$400 million, by many millions of dollars, however that might be, it is wrong. You're taking taxpayers' money used for education from Metropolitan Toronto, Ottawa, Muskoka and Hamilton and other areas for the purposes of someone else's education, and I think that's a mistake. It's a legal mistake as well.

Metro has a high proportion of ESL students. In fact, in Toronto, 40% of our students are ESL. Do you recognize that? That's where some of our money and most of our money is going into, but you're taking that away.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to share my thoughts with you upon the second reading of Bill 34, the Education Amendment Act, and this government's savings strategy in education, from which this bill ensues. This savings strategy, announced in March of this year, will achieve savings of \$400 million in the 1996-97 fiscal year. The \$400 million represents approximately 3% of the \$14 billion spent on education in Ontario.

The school boards that make up Ontario's elementary and secondary education system provide education to approximately two million pupils. School boards employ approximately 116,000 teachers, 7,000 principals and vice-principals, and 55,000 other staff. Operating expenditures per pupil in Ontario are higher than any other province in Canada. We spend close to \$1 billion more than the average of the other provinces, which comes to approximately \$500 more per child in Ontario. Yet judging by Ontario's results in national tests, student achievement in Ontario is not much better than in the other provinces. Clearly it is spending beyond our means, not underfunding, that, my colleagues, threatens the future of Ontario's students. While we must maintain and

improve quality programming, we must also find out-of-classroom savings in order to make our educational system of real value to the people of Ontario.

Bill 34 will enable school boards to implement new measures to find savings. In particular, it will provide school boards the express power to enter into cooperative agreements with other school boards and with other groups such as universities, community colleges, hospitals and municipalities. This will generate an increase in cooperative ventures across this beautiful province of Ontario, through which boards will find savings in areas such as transportation and administration. Boards have been asked to find savings in transportation of at least \$16 million in 1996 and to reduce expenditures on central administration, instructional supervision and custodial and maintenance services by \$65 million. Currently, school boards spend about \$890 million on board administration and about \$1.2 billion on custodial and maintenance services.

Under Bill 34, school boards will also be more accountable to the minister and to the public. School boards will be required to report annually on the cooperative measures they have implemented and the savings they have achieved as well as the measures they are examining. They will also have to provide a rationale for those measures they have not implemented.

The people of this province have told us there's an urgent need to find significant savings within the educational system. At the same time, they have made it clear that we must follow and allow time for solutions to be developed. This government's savings strategy will facilitate restructuring while giving school boards the flexibility to find local solutions.

In addition to measures outlined in legislation, we have announced a one-year moratorium on capital projects for 1996-97, which will save about \$167 million. Only projects that have received final approval under the Minister of Education and Training's capital grant plan and for which construction has already begun will be funded in the 1996-97 fiscal year. Projects funded through the Canada-Ontario infrastructure works program will also continue. In the interim, the Minister of Education and Training will launch a review to develop recommendations on alternative financing options for new school construction.

This government is committed to developing an educational system that is based on excellence in student achievement, as well as accountability to and affordability for all Ontario taxpayers. It is clear that through the savings strategy and the flexibility we are giving school boards through Bill 34, we are honouring this commitment.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Crozier: I'm pleased to respond to a couple of remarks the member gave. One of the administrative savings that he suggested be made is in transportation. I can tell the member that in Essex county, between the Roman Catholic separate school board and the public school board, we have a model in savings in that the transportation system is run by one board and obviously both contribute towards the efficiency of that board.

My concern is that in those areas where genuine savings have been made, and have been made for a

number of years, those efficient boards very well might be penalized because the Minister of Education may look for further savings. I wanted to point out that certainly in Essex county, for a number of years now, significant sums of money have been saved because of cooperation between the two boards.

The point was raised about capital spending, that you have a moratorium. If that just means you're going to come back in and spend the same money the next year, I guess what you've saved is only the interest on that money. There were approvals given in Essex county where cooperation between the two boards had agreed how they would share one existing school to be upgraded and another school would be built. That's now delayed and that's going to have an effect on the students and the education of those students in Essex county.

I hope I can point out that what may be the case in some parts of the province may already have been started on the road to efficiency and may be a model for other parts of the province. I think the activities in Essex county between the two boards have shown that.

Mr Marchese: I know the member for Kitchener-Wilmot, so I don't want to be overly unkind to him; I will do my best not to be too unkind. First of all, he says, "This government is committed to excellence." That's what they wrote for him. He knows it isn't true. How could they be committed to excellence? But I'm not talking about my friend from Kitchener-Wilmot; I'm talking about your government. How could you be committed to excellence when all you're doing is cutting and gutting? It doesn't do it.

1740

The fact of the matter is, with all your cuts, it means thousands and thousands of teachers are gone. They're fired. What you have is an increased number of students in the classroom whom the teacher has to teach. Where there might have been 33, you've got 35. So I'm not addressing myself to him, I'm addressing my comments to your government, to your Minister of Education. He doesn't know what he's doing.

If you say that some boards don't have enough money to provide the same educational opportunities, then they should provide the money, but don't steal money from Metro to give to somebody else, because the taxpayer is paying for the education of those students in Metro. Don't take it away from us to give it to somebody else. Tell that to your minister. That's what you've got to tell him.

When you say there is \$890 million in administration, you tell me, who would you cut? Principals? Secretaries? Visiting artists? Social workers? Educational assistants? Where would you cut? Explain that to me. Have your minister explain that to you. Where would you cut?

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I wanted to rise and compliment the member for Kitchener-Wilmot on his speech. I wanted to compliment the people in his riding for making the choice they did to have him represent them here. On the matter of education, he's well qualified to stand here in this House—

Mr Kormos: That's not going to make them feel any better.

Mr Bert Johnson: —and speak and tell the people of Ontario, in spite of what the member from Welland

would have us believe. He can speak very well, on behalf of his constituents, on education.

Some of the comments I hear from across remind me of the bandit who goes into a coffee shop. He's holding the place up and he says, "Oh, you rascal, somebody else took all the money on me." To have them stand up, after putting this province in the hole they have done, \$10 billion a year, and then stand up and say, "Oh, well, education should be the same as it was before"—I wanted to tell the people of this House and the people of Ontario how lucky they are we have people who show the good judgement, like the member for Kitchener-Wilmot, to stand up and speak for them in this House.

Mr Kormos: I'm not sure whether Mr Johnson is helping out his colleague from Kitchener-Wilmot or not by that endorsement. I suppose down the road one will soon find out.

Look what's happening. Down in Welland-Thorold, where we've got committed professionals working in our educational system, we've got a real crisis there, and the crisis is very much a made-by-Snobelen crisis. We've seen the elimination of junior kindergarten. You've got to be from Mars if you don't understand the value of junior kindergarten to the academic future of any young person.

We've seen the building and the investment in a strong educational system—a Catholic system, a public system and a French-language system as well. Down in Welland, one's child can be in day care, through JK, in the French language—la Boîte à soleil being one of the largest—all the way through elementary school and then high school in the French language. We are seeing young people becoming fluently bilingual in our school system down in Welland-Thorold, a quality that's not only to be admired, but one that's going to make them far more competitive in an increasingly strange and more peculiar and difficult workplace, and one which, I tell you, at the end of the day, helps to make this a much stronger country.

Those hardworking teachers and staff in those schools are very much under pressure. They're under the gun. They feel very much that they're being beat up on.

The young people who are in those schools know they're being beat up on. The young people in those schools didn't really know who Mike Harris was before they started seeing the type of economic violence that was being imposed upon them in their very lives. They didn't know who Mike Harris was; they know full well now as they see their futures being dashed, destroyed, by education policies that are downright barbaric.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kitchener-Wilmot, for two minutes.

Mr Leadston: We've heard from the members opposite, and I understand their role is to criticize the government, but in the same sense they offered some very eloquent suggestions. In fact, one had offered the ideas that within Essex county for many years they are doing the very essence of things that we were proposing they should do, to restructure, to reorganize, to save dollars. You say your board—and I'm familiar with some of the staff from Essex county because I was employed for 27 years with the Waterloo county public school board, of which I'm very proud, and we have excellence in education within that board and you have within your board

excellence in education, and that's what we want for all of Ontario.

But you say that for a number of years Essex county was undertaking some of the very measures we are proposing. If I was the member from Essex county and this had been going on for several years, I would have been championing that cause several years ago. Why are we hearing about it now if they have been a model and they've been a model in other areas, similar to other boards within this House? That's the time to work together.

If you want excellence in education, then work with us. You have good ideas. You have good suggestions and you have good critique, but work with us and work with your school boards. If your board, or your board in Welland-Thorold, has new innovations, we'd all love to hear about it. This is the place.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I rise to participate in this debate not so much as leader of our party and Leader of the Opposition, but as somebody who has been involved directly or indirectly in public education for about 28 years.

Needless to say, I cannot condense the concerns I have about the future of education in this province into the next 15 minutes, but I can assure you that the reason I wanted to take part in this debate is because I am deeply concerned about the future of public education in Ontario. I have a commitment, that has been a large part of my political life for 28 years, to a belief that the goal of publicly funded education is to ensure we can offer a quality of education to every person in this province regardless of their ability to pay.

When I see the devastating impact of the cuts this government is introducing to public education, when I see the inevitable deterioration of the quality of public education in this province that is coming and will come from those cuts, when I know that one of the results of that deterioration of quality is that there will be pressure in turn on this government to say, "Well, let the private sector step in; let those who can afford to pay, pay," and that this government is entirely sympathetic to saying, "Well, yes, let's have some private sector involvement in education," then I know we are on the verge of what could ultimately be the destruction of public education in this province as we know it.

I feel so strongly and so passionately that we have to fight to preserve the goals of publicly funded education and make sure that in this province we never reach the point where only those who can afford to pay are able to access the best in education, that I believe we must fight every negative, destructive measure introduced by this government.

It's with that preface that I want to spend some moments this afternoon on the preamble that the Minister of Education for this government used in introducing Bill 34. The minister began by saying this is a strategy that will achieve savings of \$400 million in the 1996-97 fiscal year. That, first of all, is not a factual statement of the cuts this government has introduced to education, and I refer back to statistics I read into the record earlier in a question to the Minister of Education which clearly show

that for public boards alone the total impact of the cuts to education is \$696 million, and that does not include separate school funding.

The additional cost that boards have to face this year which has not been funded is another \$425 million which boards must pay as a result of the ending of the social contract and the assumption of those deferred costs. Because there is no offsetting support from the government to handle the costs which are mandated for those boards to pay, that is an additional cost impact for school boards in this province. For public boards alone, that means they have to find an additional \$1 billion in this fiscal year if they are to maintain the level of services that are required.

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The Minister of Education has an easy answer for that, because that's the second thing he says in his preface to this bill. He says that they're just going to encourage school boards to reduce expenditures in the area of transportation and school board administration. He wants to give the sense that all boards have to do is to restructure and make some administrative saving costs and maybe there will be no problem at all, that they'll be able to protect classroom education. I'll tell you that is simply not the case. It is first of all a complete and total copout of the responsibility of the Minister of Education, because there is absolutely no assurance of any kind that these cuts could be managed through changes in transportation, through administrative savings.

The minister has no real idea at all of what savings are actually possible. There are three areas in which the minister is inaccurate in even making that suggestion.

First of all, the minister has based his assumption on the 1994 data that are in the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force report, which had to be submitted rather hurriedly because this government cut off the time for completion of the report as well as any opportunity for public consultation. The minister seems unable to realize that since the 1994 data were presented, there have been cuts to school boards and cuts to the administration. The minister might want to look a little bit more closely at the school board reduction task force report, because in that report there are some very specific recommendations for appropriate formulas for administrative funding. If the minister looks closely at those and if he is in some degree of agreement with that formula, he may also want to look at the fact that many school boards would actually have to put more dollars into administration if they were to meet the targets that were set out as appropriate administrative funding by that very school board reduction task force that the minister likes to quote.

The second error this Minister of Education makes is that he selectively ignores—maybe it isn't an error; maybe it is a deliberate overlooking on the part of the minister of what the school board reduction task force has to say to this minister and this government about what they would have to do, the responsibilities they would have to accept if they want to reach a goal, as the minister holds out, of going from what is seen to be 47% of our education dollars being spent on non-classroom education to 40%.

Mr Crozier: That figure is wrong too.

Mrs McLeod: It is indeed wrong, and I will get to that.

The task force report says that if the ministry wants to significantly reduce administrative spending in accordance with the recommendations of the report, the government has some additional responsibilities for curriculum development and assessment, by all means. They have a responsibility to bring in educational finance reform; they have a responsibility to look at the whole bargaining structure, and I'm not quite sure that's a good idea, to be honest, but nevertheless it's something that report recommends. The report recommends as well that the ministry and the government must pick up 100% provincially of the funding of all statutory and provincial requirements. Until the minister takes the responsibility for that kind of funding, he cannot blithely turn around and tell school boards that they should easily be able to find the cuts that he's proposed without having to hurt classroom education.

Then the minister does one other thing which I find completely indefensible. The minister, who realizes that his government was elected on a commitment not to cut classroom education, tries to say that they are keeping their commitment by redefining what he considers to be classroom education. The ministry is much more forthcoming when it presents its information, because the minister sets out a very clear definition of "instruction" and "instructional support." They take out of that business administration and general administration and computer services and plant operation and maintenance. They don't say that should be included in the cost of instruction. They take out transportation and they take out capital expenditures and debt charges. All of that they see as being cost of operation.

What is left is the cost of instruction and instructional support, and the Ministry of Education says instruction takes 85%, on average across this province, of the school board expenditures—not 53% but 85% when you define instruction and instructional support the way the Ministry of Education itself defines them. There is no question, no question at all, that this \$400-million-plus cut this government has given to education in this province is a broken promise, because those cuts are directly affecting classroom education.

I am clearly going to run out of time this afternoon to even begin to touch on the inaccuracies, the ironies in the preface the minister makes to presenting Bill 34. He does touch on the fact that they are going to have a one-year moratorium on capital projects. I suppose we should feel some relief that if he's going to make these cuts in education, at least he's not going to take that amount out of classrooms and lay off more teachers.

But it does remind me of 10 other lost years under Conservative governments when we had 10 years of capital funding freezes and a deterioration in our physical facilities that we still haven't caught up with. The minister says the future of Ontario students is at risk if we continue to spend beyond our means. The future of Ontario students is at risk. It's at risk because of the cuts the government is making, and the cuts this government

is making are three times as great as they would need to be to balance the budget because this government wants to bring in an income tax cut that will cost over \$5 billion. That, to me, is absolutely unconscionable, that the students of this province now and in the future should be paying the price for this government's irresponsible campaign promise of bringing in that income tax cut.

The minister goes on to say that Ontario spends about \$1 billion more on education than it would if its spending were in line with the averages of other provinces. As my colleague has already noted, that is an inaccuracy because it is based on 1994 figures, but more than that, because somehow in calculating that they included in the Ontario costs the costs of federal and private schools. They also included the costs of kindergarten in Ontario but forgot to include the kindergarten students. Needless to say, Ontario's cost per pupil looked a little higher than it actually is. It is simply not true that our costs in Ontario are \$1 billion more than the averages of other provinces.

Because the time is running out today, I'll conclude my comments for today on this note. I am not just offended, I am dismayed that any Minister of Education would want to hold up the average of other provinces as being the target that his government endorses and wants to hit for public education in Ontario. I believe the goal of public education in this province has been to ensure, not just something mediocre for every student in public education, but to attempt to ensure that the best would be available to every student regardless of ability to pay.

That is an incredibly ambitious goal, that we should think with public funding we would be able to offer to every student in Ontario the access to an education which is not just what we can seem to afford, not just mediocre, but what is truly of high quality. We've come a long way in this province to meeting that goal, probably further than anybody would have believed possible. We've been able to provide not only a quality education to each student without special needs, but we've been able to provide a quality education to students with special needs. We've been able to provide support for the learner in the classroom. We've been able to provide support for a broad range of curriculum issues—not just the basics, which we continue to teach, but a broad range of curriculum issues necessary for a well-rounded education.

When this minister holds up the average as something which is his personal target, I am dismayed that we in Ontario for one moment should be satisfied with offering an average, mediocre education when that means access to the best we can possibly provide is going to be lost. We had gone a long way towards reaching the very ambitious goal for public education before this minister and this government came along.

I believe, Mr Speaker, it is 6 of the clock and I will adjourn debate.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Chris (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oriole	Caplan, Elinor (L)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)
Guelph	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L)
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)	Oxford	Hardeman, Emie (PC)
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)	Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, government House leader / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Hon / L'hon Allan K. (PC) Speaker / Président
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Wellington	Amott, Ted (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
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Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
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		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Vacant

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 18 April 1996

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 18 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 avril 1996

*The House met at 1003.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CANCER PREVENTION

Ms Churley moved private member's notice of motion number 13:

That in the opinion of this House, since cancer is one of the leading causes of premature death in Ontario, claiming more than 20,000 lives annually, and since Ontario currently spends in excess of \$1 billion a year on cancer treatment, and since the previous New Democratic Party government recognized this dire threat and commissioned a task force to advise on ways to effectively stem the rising incidence of this disease, and since the Ontario Task Force on the Primary Prevention of Cancer tabled its report in March 1995, advising the government on an action-based plan for the primary prevention of cancer and the present Conservative government has yet to respond,

Therefore, in order to protect human health, prevent cancer and benefit natural ecosystems, this House calls upon the government of Ontario to (a) immediately appoint a working committee consisting of environmental, health, labour, industry, women's, aboriginal and other interested groups; and (b) work with the committee to establish realistic and measurable timetables for sunseting persistent, bioaccumulative toxic chemicals that are known or suspected carcinogens as outlined in the report of the task force.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Every year in Ontario over 20,000 people die of cancer and many others are diagnosed with cancer. We spend over \$1 billion fighting this disease, and of course there are untold social costs, indirect costs and tremendous human suffering. While it is true that we continue to make progress in research in fighting cancer, the incidence of cancer continues to rise. Obviously the time has come to put a greater emphasis on prevention, and that is why I have this resolution before you today.

This is an issue that should be and I hope today is outside the realm of ideology and partisan politics. I doubt there is anybody in this room who has not been touched by cancer, whether a friend, a loved one, or we have battled it ourselves. The good news is that there is a growing body of evidence that some cancers can be prevented.

That is why in February 1994, the former Minister of Health, Ruth Grier, who I'm happy to say is here today in the gallery, appointed a task force on the primary

prevention of cancer. The task force was chaired by Anthony Miller, and he submitted this report to the minister a year later, in 1995. The report is comprehensive and makes many challenging recommendations.

A great many of the recommendations are what we call lifestyle changes: tobacco, alcohol, exercise. These are areas where we can make some choices. That is not to say, however, that I don't support all of the recommendations, and in fact I would urge the government to act on them. But today I am going to concentrate on one of the recommendations which required direct, and in my view urgent, action on this government's part. After all, we have no choice in drinking water, eating food and breathing air. So I am asking the government to take immediate steps to stem the tide of these environmental carcinogens in our environment.

Mr Speaker, you may be surprised to know that there are over 70,000 artificial chemicals that we have allowed into our environment, and we have no idea how most of these chemicals react. In October 1993, the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy released primary and secondary lists of candidate substances for bans, phase-outs or reductions, and other lists by other bodies have been submitted to the public on this same area.

Obviously it's not possible to remove a persistent toxic substance from its source once it's there, so the focus has to be on preventing the use and production and generation of these substances in the first place. As this report points out, certain classes of persistent toxic chemicals are of particular concern, and one of these classes which we are hearing about these days is organochlorines, which include such chemicals as DDT, PCBs and dioxin. Organochlorines have been found to act as tumour promoters, and there is growing evidence that some of these substances can mimic the effects of estrogens on cells and are likely causing birth defects and reproductive problems that could have very serious long-term effects on the reproductive abilities of future generations.

1010

Dr Theo Colburn, author and scientific adviser to the World Wildlife Fund and coordinator of the distinguished Wingspread conferences, which brought together scientists from all over the world to discuss findings of human health and wildlife health problems and other dysfunctions caused by these hormone-mimicking chemicals, has recently written a book on this subject entitled *Our Stolen Future*, and I recommend that everybody read it. This is the most important book, I believe, written in this area since Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring* 35 years ago.

Dr Colburn's and other scientists' findings are indeed extremely alarming. For instance, they are certain that human male sperm count is rapidly decreasing in the industrial world. Four European studies in the past 10

years have concluded that there has been a 50% decline worldwide over the past 50 years. That's the problem with all of this stuff. We're just starting to see some very scary trends now, and obviously much more research has to be done.

The meeting of scientists, which I mentioned earlier, declared at the conclusion of their conference the following:

"We are certain of the following: A large number of man-made chemicals that have been released into the environment, as well as a few natural ones, have the potential to disrupt the endocrine system of animals, including humans. We estimate with confidence that, unless the environmental load of synthetic hormone disruptors is abated and controlled, large-scale dysfunction at the population level is possible."

Bioaccumulative substances move up the food chain, and breast-feeding of course is at the top of that food chain. When we have stories of dioxin in mothers' milk then we know we have a very serious problem.

I'm going to single out dioxin for a minute, because this government has repealed the NDP's ban on solid waste incineration in Ontario. That is a very serious problem, because dioxin is probably the most powerful carcinogen known to mankind. New data suggest that there is no safe limit. To put it in perspective, one eyedropper of dioxin can contaminate 600 tanker cars of water, so I urge the government to rethink that policy.

It is estimated that only 5% of breast cancer is genetic; the other 95% is caused by external factors. The rate of breast cancer continues to rise about 1% a year, and scientists just don't know why it's happening in two out of three women. There is no doubt that cancer is a complicated disease and there are many varied causes, but if reducing and eventually eliminating exposures to xenoestrogens can reduce only 20% of breast cancers, think of how many women's lives can be saved.

We know also that prostate cancer continues to rise, and the incidence is higher the nearer the victim lives to industry. Testicular cancer has tripled since the 1950s in Denmark, and significant increases have been reported in studies in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the US.

There is no doubt that much more research has to be done, but we cannot be lulled into passivity and do nothing until we have absolute proof. We may not get that for many generations. We can't use the traditional risk assessment that we've used for cancer in the past. We have to look at the weight of evidence somewhat in the same way the court system works.

I want to mention today before I close—it's very difficult to say all you want to say on such a complicated subject—there is in the gallery, as I mentioned, Ruth Grier, former health minister who commissioned the studies; and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, who is involved with Women and Environments Education and Development Foundation, is here; and as well Van MacDonald, who works with the Women's Network on Health and the Environment. They are very interested, and I know would certainly offer their services to work with this government, should they choose to support my motion today.

I would urge all members, when you're asking yourselves today whether you will support this resolution, ask

yourselves what are the costs to future generations if we don't act now. There are two kinds of deficits. This government talks a lot about monetary deficits. Well, there can be a much more serious deficit that we can leave to our children and our grandchildren. I would ask the government members, and all members of the House, to please show some real common sense today and support my resolution. Show some leadership to put together this working committee. I know there are many, many bodies and people out there who would be willing to work with the government to come up with realistic and measurable timetables to sunset these persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals that are known or suspected carcinogens, as outlined in the report of the task force.

I want to single out briefly the city of Toronto council which has set a real example as a municipal body, which has already started to do work on this and have its own resolutions. I would like to see our government here in Ontario take leadership in this area.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Speaker would like to recognize in the west gallery the honourable Ruth Grier, former member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I'm very pleased this morning to have the opportunity to speak on this resolution. Cancer is something that all of us can agree has touched nearly everyone in this House. I think we all take very seriously the battle against cancer and the risks associated with environmental contaminants. This issue affects us in many ways. Health and safety, our environment and our food chain are among the most important.

In March 1995, the Ministry of Health released the report of the Ontario Task Force on the Primary Prevention of Cancer. This task force included consumers and experts in health promotion, public education, research, nutrition, and occupational and environmental health. The task force report was an important step towards identifying concerns and proposing solutions, but the task force would not have accomplished anything if these proposals were not acted on.

Fortunately, Mr Speaker, there has been much action on the recommendations of the task force report, and I am pleased to tell you that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has been at the forefront.

The report identified tobacco use and improper diet as two major causes of cancer in Ontario. OMAFRA is working in cooperation with the Ministry of Health on tobacco and dietary issues.

The report undertook an extensive review of environmental concerns and their impact on cancer as well. The impact of the environment on the incidence of cancer in Ontario was thought to be less than 5%. As a result, the Ministry of Health allowed the Ministry of Environment and Energy and OMAFRA to take the lead on these issues, and OMAFRA has taken up that challenge. OMAFRA has initiated a number of highly successful programs aimed at reducing total pesticide use in our province while maintaining a safe food supply and a healthy environment.

As well, there are a number of committees and a special panel which are in place working on issues identified in the report. Under the Canada-Ontario agreement, for example, a committee comprised of senior government representatives from the federal and provincial ministries of health, environment and agriculture is working on establishing realistic and measurable timetables for sunseting persistent and bioaccumulative agricultural chemicals.

OMAFRA, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines are all signatories to this agreement on the Great Lakes basin ecosystems.

As well, the Canadian Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute of Canada have convened a special ad hoc panel to look at the general population risk associated with exposure to agricultural pesticides. We welcome this report, which is expected later this year, in the summer of 1996.

1020

In 1988, as the member for Riverdale is no doubt aware, the government introduced the Ontario Food Systems 2002 program. The goal of Food Systems 2002 was to reduce pesticide use in Ontario by 50% over 15 years. In the past five years this program has contributed over \$10 million to reduce dependence on pesticides in Ontario through research, education and technology transfer. As well, over \$4 million has been provided for competitive research at a number of institutions.

Under the Ontario pesticide education program, over 53,000 Ontario growers have participated in grower-requested mandatory education programs. The Ontario task force report called for the development and application of alternative, non-chemical pest control measures.

OMAFRA has been a world leader in the development of an integrated pest management system. In fact, 22 integrated pest management programs have been developed for Ontario commodities, including fruits, vegetables and field and greenhouse crops, and we have seen a 13% reduction in pesticide use in just the last five years.

OMAFRA is involved with many other programs, including Ontario environmental farm plans, the Ontario enhanced food quality and safety program, the Ontario pesticide container recycling program, the forestry pesticide vegetation management program, the orphan pesticide collection program and the urban pesticide reduction initiative. All of the programs and safeguards that I have mentioned guarantee the consumers of Ontario the highest quality of food, from the time of planting in the field until it reaches their kitchen table.

Rather than supporting another committee which would revisit and duplicate existing studies, our government's efforts will be directed at continued improvements to the many fine programs already in place. This government understands the importance of quality human health and will continue to provide the practical measures to protect it.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): It's my pleasure today to speak in favour of this resolution. At the outset, I want to compliment my colleague the member for Riverdale for raising this important issue and introducing it as a subject of debate, and I certainly hope

that government members will treat it with the respect and the non-partisan nature with which it was presented to the House.

Just as a preliminary comment, it seems to me that a modern government, in addressing any issue before it, ought to be considering at all times three imperatives: One is the economic, two is the social, and third ought to be the environmental. It seems to me this government fails to recognize the importance of always giving value to those three concerns. We have an opportunity here now to inject an environmental concern into some of the things this government is considering and we're offering an opportunity for it to express its concern, for not only our natural environment but obviously the health of Ontarians.

This is a report with which I was unfamiliar—I'll be honest about that—until I attended a meeting some time ago with the member for Riverdale, at which time somebody raised it. I've since had the opportunity to look at it, and like too many reports that we produce through committees of one sort or another by way of the workings of this Legislature, it goes unread and it's never had the life of law breathed into it. We have an opportunity before us.

It's a very good report, and one particular aspect raised by the member for Riverdale obviously deals with the effects of environmental carcinogens, or cancer-causing agents, that are found in our environment. This report specifically recommends that we set realistic and measurable timetables for sunseting particular toxic substances, and there's a couple of them in particular here that are referred to that I want to address and bring to the members' attention.

There are some carcinogens, or suspected carcinogens, that have been listed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and this report of the committee that took it upon itself to study these has suggested that we sunset their use. Those include the following, something called group 2A, probable human carcinogens: ethylene oxide, which is found in insecticides and fungicides; formaldehyde; and creosote, a wood preservative. It also lists carcinogens under group 2B as possible human carcinogens, including: amitrole, which is a herbicide; atrazine, another herbicide; dichlorovos, an insecticide; hexachlorocyclohexane; and a variety of others, including wood preservatives and anti-microbials.

The good news for us is that we have the information before us today, and as such, we are no longer relieved of the responsibility to take action in order to address these concerns that have been raised and thereby take some steps forward to improve the natural environment and, as I say, in a more direct sense to address health concerns.

One of the things this report also touched on was the importance of decreasing emissions from mobile sources such as cars, trucks and motorcycles.

I'm a bit frustrated with respect to one particular item. I have raised it in this House on a number of occasions now. At one point in time the city of Toronto took it upon itself to determine that it had some low-level smog problems and that these were creating health problems for

the people who were living in Toronto, so it approached this government with a view to obtaining permission to put in place a bylaw which would limit the amount of time stationary vehicles could idle. They weren't looking for any money; they were merely looking for permission to take action to protect the health of their citizenry, of the people who happen to live in Toronto or happen to be passing through it.

This government, for reasons which are beyond my understanding, decided it would not grant that permission to the good people of the city of Toronto. I think that unfortunately speaks all too clearly as to their commitment to the natural environment.

On that note, I am prepared to admit that the environment is not what you would call a top-of-mind issue today in this province. If you knock on doors, people will more likely tell you about their concerns relating to jobs and the economy, and that's quite understandable. Notwithstanding that, polls consistently tell us that the people in this province expect their government to continue to take steps to build upon the 30 years that have gone before us by successive governments to weave together a safety net of laws which give protection to our environment. I think, as legislators in this province, when we're presented with this more pressing need that people raise on a regular basis relating to jobs and the economy, we have a responsibility to keep in mind those three imperatives I talked about at the outset: the social, the economic, as well as the environmental.

This is a specific way, which has been raised by the member for Riverdale, that this government can, at little if any cost, strike a committee that would consist of those who have some connection with this issue and who could then work to establish those kinds of timetables to sunset chemicals and suspected carcinogens which are right now having their effect on the people of this province. It's not an expensive recommendation or undertaking; it is hardly cumbersome; it's not overly intricate or complicated. In fact, it's something that's eminently doable.

Something else this government ought to be considering with respect to environmental concerns is that it ought to be giving real thought to putting in place mandatory vehicle inspection so that we can begin to address in a very real way the damages caused by car and truck emissions into the air of this province. We have, as many members will recognize, some of the higher readings, some of the most difficulty with low-level smog in the country here in southern Ontario. We have had an understanding of the cause of this problem for a very long time and we are now presented with the responsibility to take some steps.

1030

The province of British Columbia has had on its books for some time now legislation which requires that people who drive cars attend for vehicle inspection. It's not an overly complicated system. There's a certain cost associated with that, admittedly, but at the end of the day we owe it not only to ourselves but to future generations to do what we can while we can, and given the information we presently have, to take steps to protect our natural environment.

To conclude, I am pleased to offer my support to the member for Riverdale for an eminently reasonable, non-partisan and workable resolution, and I trust the government members will treat it with the respect it deserves and agree to support it.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm delighted to be participating in the debate on this resolution today and to support the efforts of my colleague from Riverdale on what I think is a very important issue, for a resolution that I think is a very practical option for all of us as legislators to pursue in recommending to the government.

I must say in beginning my remarks that I listened carefully to the member for Hastings-Peterborough and I'm quite concerned with what I heard. With all due respect, I have to say that I think it represented an approach which is a tunnel-vision approach to how we deal with these very important and complex health issues; in fact, how imperative it is for us to understand the interrelationship of much of what occurs in our life and its impact on our health. You cannot approach issues of health promotion, of wellbeing, with a very narrow focus on operations of individual ministries or programs or whatever.

I heard you list a number of very positive initiatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, which you say should contribute to control of toxic substances and therefore to the goal of preventing preventable cancers, but those programs were all in place at the time in which the task force which was called together to look seriously at prevention of cancer undertook its work. We were aware of all of that and that was part of what had been viewed, and still there is a need for a much broader coordination.

One of the things I hope this government comes to understand is that our health care system, as fine as it is and as much as we want to contribute to wellbeing through the health care system—you must come to an understanding that the things that determine our health status as a population often lie outside of hospitals and doctors and treatments. It's where we get our source of health in the first place. It's the things that determine our health. It's our environment. It's our housing. It's our income distribution. It's nutrition. It's a whole range of other things. The previous government adopted a framework of looking at determinants of health and understanding through the operations of all aspects of government, through the operations, the programs, how that contributed to making Ontarians more healthy.

Your health minister has certainly mouthed the words that he supports it and we'll see if it comes true in action. But we also understood that within the envelope of what's defined as health care spending there needed to be major reform and that the focus had to be shifted from simply paying out more and more money on illness treatment at the end of the system to more being invested at the beginning of the system; that is, in keeping people healthy in the first place, in illness prevention, in health promotion. That was what the work of the task force was all about. Within the Ministry of Health there was a recognition that cancer is a major, major challenge for the health status of the public. Twenty thousand people a

year in Ontario die from cancer. We spend \$1 billion a year in this province treating that cancer.

We understood as a government and for the first time brought people together to start to look at how we prevent cancer, to develop a comprehensive cancer strategy. Out of those discussions, former Minister of Health Ruth Grier established the task force which led to this report, a report with practical, concrete suggestions about taking steps to prevent cancer.

How can you disagree with that? How can you say this resolution is simply about another committee? It's about bringing people together across a range of interests in this province to enact recommendations from this task force, to talk about what are the reasonable levels and limits and time frames we can put in place to phase out the use of toxic substances in many different industrial settings and farm settings and other settings.

That is a worthwhile goal and you need the coordination across ministries. It's not simply an issue of the Ministry of Environment and Energy or the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. That kind of tunnel vision is not going to get us to the solutions we need. We have to work together across efforts within government, across efforts within our society. Surely, the goal of preventing the kind of carnage we see in this province from death from cancer is worth proceeding with what were well-founded recommendations from a non-partisan task force attempting to achieve that goal of preventing cancer.

This is an incredibly important issue and I can tell you, as someone who has done a lot of work over the years with women who have survived, and some of my friends who have not survived, breast cancer, 95% of breast cancer cases cannot be traced to genetic predisposition. It's external environmental factors. We can do something about this. This is a leading killer of women. There are recommendations that very wise people who worked on this task force have pulled together, and this resolution simply takes the recommendations and says: "It's been a year this has been sitting there. We want you to act on it."

All of us, as legislators, want the government to work with a committee to establish reasonable time frames, to establish limits and to establish the phase-out of certain toxic substances. I don't know how there could be disagreement with that. I find it amazing to hear suggestions that this would simply be another committee.

I want to say to you in closing, because I want to leave time for the member for Riverdale to wrap up in this debate, that in the area of health care it is the one area where in this House we should be able to put aside partisan differences. We should be able to understand and agree on the goal.

We should be able to look to the volume of work that has been done that says that to preserve our medicare system, our health care system, we must move to invest in the front end of the system, in the promotion of health, in the prevention of illness. We must take the time and we must think through the strategies to get to a point where we're not spending \$1 billion a year on treating cancer, through to the point of 20,000 people a year dying, but where we spend some time and energy at the

beginning to try to prevent people from contracting cancer.

That's what this resolution is about. This is not a cost to the government. This is not an imposition on your Common Sense Revolution in any way. This is simply enacting the advice of people who spent a great deal of time and effort coming together from across the broad expertise of the public and the health care system to recommend to government the next steps to take on a prevention strategy.

It's amazing it had never been done in the province of Ontario before, it's amazing we had never looked at how do we prevent cancer, but we hadn't. Ruth Grier brought that task force together; that task force reported; there are concrete recommendations. These are only two of the recommendations that the member for Riverdale has put before this House today.

I urge members here to support the resolution. It's simply, when passed, an urging on the part of legislators who care about the future health of the public of Ontario, an urging to the Minister of Health and to the government to proceed in a very commonsense way in enacting the strategy to prevent cancer. I hope you will support the members' resolution. I think it is deserving of your support. I think the public would like to see this kind of strategy be enacted.

1040

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to speak a few words with respect to the resolution put forward by Ms Churley, the member for Riverdale. The topic of cancer is something that I think all three parties are most concerned with, whether you go back to the Liberal administration, or certainly your administration—and it's quite appropriate that the former minister, Mrs Grier, is in the House. It was quite obvious I didn't always agree with many of her policies, but certainly I supported her position on Bill 119, the tobacco bill. This was one of the concerns of your government.

We can all tell stories of how cancer has affected us personally, whether it's friends or members of our own family. There was a member of your cabinet, a former colleague of yours, who obviously had grave problems. Cancer is indeed a serious problem, and whatever party is sitting on this side should be taking whatever steps are needed to deal with it. I support you in bringing the issue forward.

The task force report you have referred to in your resolution came out in March of last year. In the introduction it refers to some of the facts you talk about, talking about cancer as being "one of the leading causes of mortality in Ontario, accounting for over 20,000 deaths per year. Approximately 27% of all deaths in Ontario are attributable to cancer." There's no question we all support the issue of a government doing something. Whether it be a federal government, whether it be a provincial government, whether it be an international government—the government of the United States, for example—we are all concerned with this topic.

In the executive summary, the task force stated: "In recognition of the importance of preventive measures for reducing the cancer burden in Ontario, a Task Force on the Primary Prevention of Cancer was appointed by the

Ontario Minister of Health in February 1994. The purpose of the task force was to advise the minister with respect to the development of an action-based, effective and feasible plan detailing recommendations for the primary prevention of cancer." Indeed, the report goes through and spends considerable time on these issues.

The member for Riverdale has mentioned the fact that there is no 100% proof that these are the causes of cancer. That is referred to in the report at page 34, where it talks about the known or suspected environmental carcinogens: "To prevent the further generation of environmental toxins, bans on production and imports are necessary, but are not sufficient on their own as these substances can enter the Canadian environment from elsewhere." There's no question that does happen. These things are everywhere; they're in the air, they're in the food, they're in the soil. Obviously, we need to look at those things. But we must be very careful about how we go about it. I guess that is the difference between our party and your party: We may agree philosophically on certain things; it's how you go about dealing with them.

The Ministry of Health, as one of the earlier speakers has mentioned, has currently undertaken a number of cancer initiatives in the area of prevention, detection and treatment of cancer in the province of Ontario. It's been mentioned that there's the tobacco strategy, which your government spent a considerable amount of time on, which seeks to reduce tobacco use, especially among young people, because tobacco is certainly the primary preventable cause of cancer in the province; the prevention of early childhood cancer; early detection programs like the Ontario breast screening program and a pilot cervical cancer screening program; treatment centres like the London Regional Cancer Centre and the Windsor Regional Cancer Centre. A transitional team is looking at cancer care in Ontario and is expected to make its report to the provincial government in June of this year.

I think we all can stand in our place and support the member philosophically as to the need to take whatever initiatives are required to rid ourselves of this dreaded disease. The problem I have with your resolution is creating another level of added bureaucracy. All of the things you're—well, you shake your head, but I'll tell you that all of the things you're asking the committee to do, that's what governments are supposed to do.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Well, do it.

Mr Tilson: Philosophically, we talk about doing things, and one of the differences between our government and your former government is that we don't like layers of bureaucracy. That's what you did.

Mr Laughren: Stop being silly. That's why we're right, because we consulted. You're being ridiculous.

Mr Tilson: I'm not being silly. That's why we're in the terrible financial position we're in.

Mr Laughren: You've got all the answers. You know it all, don't you?

Mr Tilson: This is an added layer of bureaucracy and we find it puzzling as to why a government would set up a committee to review the recommendations made by a previous committee when we have government departments, government ministries that are quite capable of carrying out this mandate. This is something the Ministry

of Health and the Ministry of Environment and Energy undertake anyway.

Mr Laughren: What arrogance. Wisdom resides only there. What a bunch.

Mr Tilson: One of the problems with carcinogens is that you cannot eliminate the presence of certain carcinogens by merely prohibiting their manufacture in the province of Ontario.

Mr Laughren: Gee, the incompetence of your colleagues shows all wisdom doesn't reside over there. You're surrounded by the incompetents you are.

Mr Tilson: As I indicated, carcinogens will continue to be carried across—

Mr Laughren: How can you say you don't need the advice of Ontario?

Mr Tilson: The member keeps blathering away over there, Mr Speaker, and I only have a few minutes left. If you can keep him under control.

Carcinogens will continue to be carried across borders in the air and water, so as a result the Ministry of Environment and Energy is working with other ministries of the environment to harmonize environmental management activities across the country.

We are concerned, of course, about the effect of doing something when you're not certain what the ultimate effect will be. We're concerned, for example, about what effect this will have on our food supply. I repeat your statement: You don't have 100% proof that these things are causing what you say they are. There are products that are continuing to be imported from other countries, from other provinces. I suppose we could encourage the federal government to ban certain food products that contain these things from coming, but you have to be a little bit more careful as to how you go about it.

Mr Speaker, there are a couple of comments other members from this side of the House would like to make, so I would thank you for allowing me to speak on this issue, but I can tell you I will be opposing this resolution simply on the fact that it's creating another level of bureaucracy we don't need.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): First of all, I want to commend the member for Riverdale for this resolution. It is true these are responsibilities of government, but all governments of all parties at all levels have always worked with task forces and volunteer committees. I see this committee as being just another arm that will help us in the cause of eliminating cancer ultimately.

The fact that it is everywhere, as the member for Dufferin-Peel has said, is the very argument for doing as much as we can to eradicate this particular disease. I think all of us whose families have been touched by this disease know at first hand that something has to be done, and if anything is done and we can do all of these measures cumulatively, such as the sunseting of the persistent toxic chemicals, that at least is the beginning. It's only about 20 years ago that they banned the manufacture of PCBs, and that in itself began a new era of prevention.

Hopefully, we will all support this resolution. Frankly, I think you'd have to be out of your mind to vote against this resolution.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm happy to carry on with the comments of the member for Mississauga South, who has certainly suggested something very strong this morning; that is, that anybody who would oppose this motion is out of his or her mind. Therefore, it would be difficult to oppose this.

There is no question that it identifies a very major problem we have in our society. If you talk to individuals, particularly those who have had people in the family afflicted by cancer, we recognize there is a consensus out there, regardless of a person's political affiliation or particular background, that a major effort has to be made to deal with, yes, the curing of the disease, yes, the treatment of the disease, but certainly moving into the field of prevention.

1050

The suggestion that is made in this resolution that the government of Ontario "(a) immediately appoint a working committee consisting of environmental, health, labour, industry, women's, aboriginal and other interested groups; and (b) work with the committee to establish realistic and measurable timetables for sunseting persistent, bioaccumulative toxic chemicals that are known or suspected carcinogens as outlined in the report of the task force" makes a lot of sense, but it really suggests that you have to make a very significant initiative take place in the Ministry of Environment.

My concern right now is that the Ministry of Environment has just had another \$200 million eliminated from its budget. I know it sounds good to say that we are going to reduce government expenditures, and certainly there have to be areas where governments have to become more efficient and have to reduce those expenditures; I think everyone accepts that. But let me give fair warning that in the Ministry of Environment what you're going to see is an increase in the accumulation of these substances that are made reference to in this resolution and not an elimination or a reduction of them.

There was a major initiative put forward called the municipal-industrial strategy for abatement. Really, in very straightforward terms, that is a very extensive water pollution regulation which had as its goal the virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances going into our waterways. That, by the way, was written into an agreement over Niagara Falls and the Niagara River with the Department of Environmental Protection in New York state, the federal authority, which is the Environmental Protection Agency, in the US, Environment Canada and Environment Ontario. The reason that was included was that we wanted to see that virtual elimination. In other words, I think people looked at zero discharge. It was defined in that agreement as the virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances. And I know that is the goal of this particular initiative.

There are persistent substances that do not leave us. Once they are in the soil or in the waterways or in the air, where they're deposited elsewhere, they do not leave us. In fact, they do not leave our bodies in many cases. When you do an autopsy of a human body of, say, the age of 70, if you did a very extensive autopsy, you would find an accumulation of many of these substances. There is rather strong evidence that these substances that are

accumulated through the workplace, through simply our lives, through exposure to contaminants, are with us and that they have a connection with various diseases, including cancer. You will see that the rate of cancer in areas which are heavily industrially polluted tends to be higher. There is, as I say, consistent evidence out there that ignoring the environment, that not trying to deal with these substances, will ultimately have a detrimental effect on the human body and on the health care bill in this province, if you want to put it in very crass terms. So when I look at this resolution, I think it will make a contribution.

A former Minister of the Environment and member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Ruth Grier, is here today. She had a very great interest in the environment as a critic, and then of course as Minister of the Environment and then as Minister of Health for this province. She would know, as others in this assembly know, how important it is to have a strong and vital Ministry of Environment with the appropriate resources, with the appropriate staff and with the clout within government to ensure that we bring about this kind of reduction.

The committee will be of benefit. Acting upon the recommendations of the committee will be the true test of whether we're going to deal seriously with environmental challenges that face our province and other jurisdictions. I think we can be a leader in this connection. But it really points to the full implementation of the water pollution regulation that was put into effect in 1990 and is still being put into effect. It calls for a clean air program which would be in effect the same kind of regulation affecting air pollutants. I think it looks very wisely to the workplace, where many are exposed to the kinds of substances which are bound to have a detrimental effect on health.

Because cancer is a disease which is so prominent in our society, quite widespread, I'm sure all of the population of Ontario would respond positively to this initiative and others which are designed to reduce those contaminants that may contribute to cancer.

Ms Churley: When I wrote this resolution, I worked very, very hard to make it as non-partisan as possible. In my speech today I worked very hard to be non-partisan. Believe me, that can be very difficult in this place, given my concerns about a lot of this government's agenda, and in my case, as critic for the environment, the cuts to the environment. I stayed away from all of that because I truly believed that something as motherhood as my resolution today—I'm shocked at the words I heard from the members of the government side. This is not creating another layer of bureaucracy. That is an excuse for inaction, and I am afraid I am seeing this government now using this "Let's not create any more bureaucracy" as a dumb excuse to not take their responsibilities as a government in the province of Ontario.

My God, we're talking about \$1 billion a year being spent by the taxpayers of this province. We're talking about untold anguish as people go through cancer care and many die. We had a member of our caucus, Anne Swarbrick, who went through an agonizing time with breast cancer; we had another member of our caucus, when we were in government, Margery Ward, the

member for Don Mills, die of cancer. We've all had, as everybody here said today, people close to us suffering from cancer. This is not another level of bureaucracy. The member for Nickel Belt as well, as we all know, just recently went through and is now a cancer survivor. We're very, very happy to have him with us today. He's just gone through the agonizing process of recuperating from cancer.

I was shocked at the response particularly from the member for Dufferin-Peel. He says he is concerned that because we're not 100% certain about these things, he can't support it. I would say to you that in the document which we're all referring to today—and he neglected to read some of the quotes like this—"However, sunseting should be put in place recognizing the different degrees of evidence now available. Thus, in establishing time-tables for sunseting, early consideration should be given to ban those organochlorines," etc. They're erring on the side of safety here.

This is the same government, however—and that's what was so ironic and shocking and frankly stupid about this response—that is asking us to all take a giant leap of faith on a 30% tax cut which they say is going to stimulate the economy and create jobs and take everybody off welfare and we're all going to live in honeyland or something. They have no business plans to prove that; they have no studies to prove it. It's an enormous leap of faith. They just stood in this House recently with a summary of business plans but with no real business plans to justify and show the impacts of these massive multibillion-dollar cuts they're making to social services and health and right across the board. They're asking us, again, to take a giant leap of faith. We don't have 100% proof, in fact far from it, that this is going to work, but, "Trust us."

Here we are talking about cancer and death and billions of dollars being spent and they're saying, "We need 100% proof before we can go along with this." So what we've been told by members of this government today, except for the member for Mississauga South, whom I applaud, is that they do not support the phase-out of carcinogenic pollutants in our environment. That is absolutely shocking; you're not supporting this resolution because you don't have 100% proof. That's another excuse, like the bureaucracy.

1100

If there was ever a time when we needed a non-partisan body of people working together outside government and with government to try to deal with these catastrophic problems, it is now. While this government is busy deregulating like crazy throughout the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, when you add them all up, and I'm in the process of doing that, the cuts to our environmental protection are phenomenal.

The member for Hastings-Peterborough talks about the Canada-Ontario agreement. These are things that have been acted on for some time. It's slow, it's acting in isolation; he didn't talk about what the deadlines are and

that with these huge cuts that are being made to that ministry, there will be no staff left to run these programs any more. Even that is going to disappear. The member did not say whether or not he supported the sunseting but I assume, because he's voting against the resolution, he doesn't.

I find this very hard to understand. I can't understand, when I'm asking for—there is a huge number of resolutions in this book, people with expertise in the area who are very worried. In fact, one of them who was working on this report—it's dedicated to his memory—M. David Kassirer, died of cancer in the process of writing this report. There are very dedicated people who worked on this who are very worried about the lack of preventive care we have in the province of Ontario.

We had an opportunity today to take just one piece of this resolution to show Ontario that in areas such as cancer and cancer prevention we can all work together. We can work with the citizens of this province who are working very hard to come together and try to correct the problems that are out there, and in a crass way, to save taxpayers' money down the road; that is the real irony in this situation, where people can do something, and this government is saying no today.

I assume that the members didn't pay a lot of attention to this resolution, that there was a bit of scurrying around and that the minister had to take a quick look at it and tell people how to vote today: "Don't let them add on another level of bureaucracy. We don't want to have to deal with this."

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Listen to my argument. For once, listen to what's being said over here. Sometimes the opposition has some good advice and some important things to say. We're elected as well. When I hear that kind of heckling over there, I'm upset because this is something that I believe we could make a difference on. I believe that you were told today, without full knowledge, without having read this report, not to support my resolution because it would put on a layer of bureaucracy. Think about it. Look at the people who are sitting in the gallery today. Two of these women have been working for years on women's health and are very aware that if we don't start doing something and pulling together a coordinated effort, nothing is going to happen.

The very nature of the complexities of these recommendations is the reason why it for a coordinated strategy. I have no illusion that it's going to be difficult to ban and phase out a lot of these chemicals. The report admits that and says that. We need industry involved in a big way; we need all of the community involved in a big way to make this happen.

I urge all members to support this resolution today.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr Tilson moved private member's notice of motion number 12:

That, in the opinion of this House, since the federal Liberal government introduced section 745 to the Criminal Code in 1976; and

Since a person convicted of first-degree murder is not eligible to apply for parole for 25 years at the time of sentencing; and

Since section 745 says that where an offender has a parole ineligibility period of more than 15 years and the offender has served at least 15 years, or only 60% of their sentence, the offender can apply to the court for a reduction of the parole ineligibility period; and

Since CAVEAT, Victims of Violence, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association, and the Police Association of Ontario have all called on the federal government to immediately repeal section 745 from the Criminal Code; and

Since holding hearings under section 745 uses precious resources which could be redirected elsewhere to prosecute serious crime; and

Since the federal government has failed to pass a private member's bill that Liberal backbench member John Nunziata of Ontario tabled in the federal House of Commons in the years 1991, 1994 and 1995, that calls for the repeal of section 745; and

Since federal Justice Minister Allan Rock has failed to state definitively that the federal government will repeal section 745 to keep convicted murderers off the streets of our communities;

Therefore the government of Ontario should urge the government of Canada to repeal section 745 to ensure that convicted murderers serve their entire sentences and to protect victims, their families and the community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would the member for Dufferin-Peel like 10 minutes?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The resolution which I have just read essentially outlines what the federal legislation under the Criminal Code, section 745, deals with, and it has created, particularly in recent years, a great amount of consternation as to what we should be doing.

Yesterday I had a press conference in which a number of representatives, basically the groups that were referred to in the resolution, came to Queen's Park and gave their interpretation of the problems that are being created with respect to section 745.

Section 745 was introduced to the Criminal Code of Canada in 1976 by the federal Liberal government of the day, and its purpose at that time was to give lifers the possibility, however remote, of an early parole. It became known as the "faint hope clause." At that time, it was stated that it was to be used only in the very rarest of circumstances. What has happened over the last 20 years has been anything but rare. Corrections Canada reports that 79% of first-degree murderers who have applied have received some form of early release. That's 50 out of the 63 cases dealt with up to December of last year.

There's a wonderful report that was given to me by Victims of Violence which I'd recommend that some of you read. It's called Section 745 of the Criminal Code and the entire paper deals with this subject. It was given to me by one of the people who came yesterday, Sharon Rosenfeldt, whose son was one of the victims of Clifford Olson, and I'd recommend that all of you read that. It has even more up-to-date statistics than the ones I've just reiterated to you.

When a murderer, a killer, is convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced, there is no discretion to the judge. That's how seriously we treat this crime in this country. The sentence must be 25 years with no possibility of parole. But in 1976, as I stated, section 745 changed the finality of that conviction because section 745 says that where an offender has a parole ineligibility period of more than 15 years and the offender has served at least 15 years, the offender can apply to the court for a reduction of the parole ineligibility period.

That application is made through the provincial system, where a provincial jury deals with it and determines whether or not the killer is subject to parole. If that application is successful, it then goes on to the federal parole board.

1110

Yesterday morning, as I indicated, a news conference was held supporting my resolution to request that the federal government repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada, and at that news conference there were representatives from the Canadian Police Association. Chief Julian Fantino, who is vice-president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the chief of police for the city of London, was there. He made some comments.

There were representatives from the Police Association of Ontario; Rick Huston and Brenda Lawson were there. Priscilla de Villiers of CAVEAT and Sharon and Gary Rosenfeldt of Victims of Violence were there. As I indicated, Sharon and Gary are the parents of Daryn, who was killed by Clifford Olson, who has been gaining quite a lot of publicity. He's taken a course somewhere on how to be a minister, down in Acadia University, I think, at the cost of the Canadian taxpayer, and he has served notice that he intends to be applying for his review of section 745. That comes up in August, and he has already filed a letter with the Chief Justice of British Columbia indicating that he's applying for this review.

He even had the gall to write a letter to John Nunziata, the Liberal MP from Ontario, expressing what he thinks of Mr Nunziata, who has done the wonderful work with respect to this bill. I'm going to read the letter because this shows the arrogance of a man who conceivably could be let out on our streets with this section 745:

"John, you're a little late in reintroducing your private member's bill, the faint hope clause. Sorry, sucker. Smile now. The beast of British Columbia"—and I'm cleaning up the language because it's full of obscenities—"I'm coming home August 12 and not a thing you can do."

That is an attitude from one of the killers who even qualifies. The very fact that this man has the possibility of applying—he has no right to apply. He was sentenced for life, and now this terrible section has the possibility that he could be out on the streets in August of this year.

As I indicated, Priscilla de Villiers of CAVEAT was there. She lost her daughter Nina to Jonathan Yeo, who slaughtered her when he was out on bail. The Rosenfeldts' son Daryn, of course, was murdered by Olson.

Olson's right is not so much the issue as the fact that all the victims' families are reduced to reliving the original nightmare when Olson receives the judicial review of his sentence. The families will only be eligible

to submit a victim impact statement. That's all they can do in order to maintain his incarceration, these families that go through these terrible trials. We all were shocked at the Bernardo horror story, and families like those victims are going to have to go through this again with these hearings.

It will mean as well, as with the families of murder victims, that people like the Rosenfeldts must relive the emotional agony in front of another jury. Section 745 requires that a jury be present to hear reasons for and against early parole. If a jury decides that people like Clifford Olson must be incarcerated another five years, then again in five years the Rosenfeldts will have to go through another living hell, another jury, another victim impact statement.

Under the present law, jury trials cost our province for trial time, for courtroom time, for staff and legal assistance for prisoners. This money that comes out of the coffers of the provincial taxpayer could be refocused on prosecuting other serious crimes and dealing with other serious crimes that occur in our province.

British Columbia and Alberta are presently considering requesting the federal government to repeal this section, and I am asking this Legislature to be the first provincial government to vote in favour of asking the federal government to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code.

I can tell you that I listened to the comments of Sharon and Gary Rosenfeldt yesterday, and as this date in August is approaching, their lives are becoming more and more of a hell.

I only have a minute left and I do recommend to members of this House that no matter how you vote in this resolution—and I hope you do, because Mr Rock and his federal caucus are meeting shortly. It was supposed to have been yesterday but I gather that's been delayed so this is still on the records and we still have an opportunity to persuade the Liberal caucus along with other members, people across this country, to ask him to completely repeal the section. Mr Rock has made suggestions that he is going to tinker with it, that he's going to clarify who is qualifying for this section and who is not.

When you're sentenced to life, you're sentenced to life, and that's that. It's as simple as that. Anyone who watches these terrible crimes, if you support this resolution, just remember the Bernardo trial. That's the type of crimes that we're dealing with, these unbelievable, terrible crimes, and to allow these people out in 15 years and take the attitude of Clifford Olson is absolutely inexcusable. So I encourage those supporters—

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): You are disgusting. You play to the cheapest, the meanest level.

Mr Tilson: You'll have your chance, and I'll tell you that it's time—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Rainy River is out of order.

Mr Tilson: I'm amazed that the heckling is going on from the other side, which implies that he's going to continue to support section 745.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I rise to speak to the resolution brought forth by the member for

Dufferin-Peel and in support of the positions of CAVEAT and Victims of Violence and others. You may remember that I was very involved in bringing about a charter of rights for victims of crime, and this is an issue which is of extreme importance.

The federal government is currently considering changes to 745 and I think the Legislature has an opportunity to make some comments with respect to that. I'd like to review just briefly what the system is like now so we have a full understanding of what it is we'll be voting on.

The Criminal Code now provides for automatic life sentences for murder. For first-degree murder the parole and eligibility period is 25 years. For second-degree, the judge, after considering any recommendation from the jury, sets the period somewhere between 10 and 25 years. What section 745 does is allow for a special judicial review at the 15-year point of the sentence. The offender must apply for the review. The application is made to the Chief Justice of the superior court in the province and the Chief Justice then designates a judge and panel to hear the application.

The jury has complete authority to decide that (a) there should be no reduction in parole ineligibility period, (b) that there should be a reduction by a specified number of years, or (c) the ineligibility period should be terminated. If the jury rejects that application, it can then set a future date when the applicant can reapply for judicial review.

A formal hearing is held. Correctional Service Canada prepares a report which describes the institutional record of the offender. You may recall that Bill C-41, which was an act to amend the Criminal Code, was passed in the last session and amended section 745 to require the jury to also consider any information provided by a victim either at the time of the imposition of the sentence or at the time of the hearing. Therefore, a victim impact statement is required at the time that the hearing is held.

The jury then must consider the character of the applicant, his conduct during the sentence, the nature of his offence, and other matters that are considered relevant in the matter. Two thirds of the jury must agree on the determination. Even if the jury reduces the ineligibility period, the National Parole Board still must determine at a parole hearing whether the offender should receive parole.

The point is that there are some steps that have to be followed; it is not automatic and it is not indiscriminate.

Regardless of the decision of the jury or the parole board, the life sentence continues for the natural life of the offender. Parole is subject to conditions and can be revoked for breach.

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We've heard a little bit from the member for Dufferin-Peel about statistics, and I'd like to run through those briefly. We have currently in penitentiary some 2,085 murderers—that's about 15% of the penitentiary population—574 of whom are first-degree and therefore subject to 25 years in jail. A number of murderers have been eligible for parole under section 745. The stats up to December 1995 are as follows: 175 people have been eligible and only 74 have applied, that is, only 42% of

those eligible have actually applied; and 63 reviews have been completed, with 13 refused a reduction in parole and 50 granted some partial reduction in parole.

It's important to bear in mind the numbers. It's also important to bear in mind that this is still relatively new and that the stats with respect to reoffending by murderers are also very new. For instance, of the 558 first- and second-degree murderers released between 1975 and 1990, only five committed another murder. That means less than 1% recommitted. That's an important statistic we should keep in mind as we consider our recommendations to the government.

It might also interest the Legislature to know what the parole eligibility is around the world in countries that have more or less the same judicial system as we do. Virtually everywhere, the parole eligibility threshold, if you like, is somewhere between 10 and 15 years. In the United States, the average time served before parole is 18 years at the federal level, and 15 years is the average for all the states. The 25 years we have is different from what is being done elsewhere in the world.

The federal ministry, as we know, is committed to changes by the end of April. It has stated that improvements are required, and I think everyone in this House can agree that improvements indeed are required. There are some cautions we should bear in mind as we send our resolution to the federal government, and that is that blanket rules sometimes have a way of catching people we would not want to be caught under those rules.

I'll give you one example. Not everyone in a penitentiary serving life for murder is a Clifford Olson. Some people are, for instance, women accused of killing abusive husbands. The question is whether they should be treated in the same way, whether there shouldn't be some facility within the rules for allowing for those kinds of extenuating circumstances.

I would also focus on the fact that, regardless of the crime, rehabilitation is critical. Whether we release a murderer at 15 years or at 25 years, eventually they're going to be in society. It is absolutely crucial that we enable those individuals to function as safe members of our community and not damage our communities and our children's safety and our own. That is an important factor that should be noted.

There's no question that the bureaucracy currently in place to deal with section 745 is excessive, and I think it should be sent to the Attorney General for review. To suggest that after having had a full hearing of the individual's case we then have subsequent hearings to determine virtually the same thing, at very high cost—that may not be what the rule was designed for, and we want to be very cautious in looking at that.

I support this resolution in principle, but let me say this to the member and to the government: There's a hypocrisy in this resolution coming forth from that part of the House. Remember that just a few months ago we were here and, under considerable pressure, managed to have an inquiry into the Homolka case. It was the member for Dufferin-Peel who mentioned the Bernardo case. I remind you that despite public outcry, we were not able to have a public inquiry into one of the most horrendous crimes that has been committed in the history

of the province. And I would remind you that the terms of reference set for that inquiry were of such a nature that basic evidence could not be obtained under oath by the judge in question, and that it occurred at a time prior to other facts being able to be put before the judge in question. We were left with a decision that essentially said, "The status quo prevails." We did not reopen the Homolka inquiry, despite evidence to the contrary that it could be done. Furthermore, we did nothing at all in dealing with the parole provisions for Homolka herself.

I have to say to the member for Dufferin-Peel, as I rise to support his resolution in principle, with the cautions I have given, that he would be well served to go back and examine the record of his government on this issue prior to sending recommendations of this sort to the federal government. What has been done here with respect to Homolka is certainly not justice. I hope the federal government will provide justice, but I must say, I would have expected a far different position on the part of this government with respect to its own House.

Mr Hampton: I want to take part in this debate to shed some further light on the issues that seem to be in dispute here, or at least the issues presented by the member for Dufferin-Peel.

There is some history that has been left out, and it's history worth noting. The fact is that Canada amended the Criminal Code between 1974 and 1976. The member refers to the fact that in 1976, the maximum sentence without parole eligibility was increased to 25 years. That was in 1974. What the member doesn't acknowledge is that before that, the maximum period without eligibility for parole was 10 years. So between 1974 and 1976, the maximum sentence without eligibility for parole was increased from 10 years to 25 years.

In increasing that maximum sentence without eligibility for parole, Parliament put in a check and balance, and the check and balance was to say, if after 15 years of serving the maximum sentence someone wants to apply for a judicial review of the remainder of their sentence, they're eligible to do so. Why would Parliament do that? It's worthwhile looking at the statistical evidence.

The fact is that most murders committed in Canada are not premeditated murders. In fact, most situations of murder happen between people who know one another. They happen, in most cases, when the individuals, whether through alcohol or whether through emotion, temporarily do something they would not otherwise do. That's the historical fact with respect to these situations.

The statistical evidence shows that people who have been convicted of murder in Canada are the least likely to reoffend of any group or of any crime type. What Parliament was trying to get at was the irrationality of keeping someone locked up for a further 10 years when a review of their sentence would indicate that (a) they are not likely to reoffend, and (b) there is clear evidence of rehabilitation and clear evidence of regret. So Parliament looked at it and said why in these cases would we want to keep someone locked up for an additional 10 years, particularly when the average cost of keeping someone incarcerated at this point in time is close to \$50,000 a year? In other words, Parliament was saying, in terms of examining how we ought to use precious justice

resources, does it make sense to keep someone locked up for an additional 10 years at a cost of \$50,000 a year, or does it make sense to devote those resources in the justice system to where they may more usefully be put to work? Parliament, I think, set out a logical standard or a logical test for the utilization of resources.

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The indication is that the 1974-76 amendments in themselves, that is, increasing the maximum sentence without parole eligibility from 10 years to 25 years, resulted in almost another 1,000 individuals being incarcerated who otherwise wouldn't have been incarcerated. In other words, the cost to the justice system of that amendment was over \$450 million—\$450 million that could have been spent prosecuting crime, \$450 million that could have been devoted to better policing, more community policing.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): What's a life worth? Only \$50,000.

Mr Hampton: The member over here from Etobicoke-Rexdale rants on in a tone that I can only call revenge, as if the only goal of the justice system is to visit revenge. That is not the only goal of the justice system. The justice system, yes, is to mete out penalty where it's proven upon conviction that penalty is required. The goal of the justice system is to protect the public. The goal of the justice system is to attempt as much as possible to rehabilitate someone.

What Parliament had to grapple with was, what is the rationale for keeping someone in jail a further 10 years when all of the evidence you're presented with indicates that it is unlikely they're going to reoffend, that they are filled with remorse and regret for the events that happened and that they have rehabilitated themselves?

What public interest, in terms of protecting the public, in terms of protecting victims, is served by keeping someone like that in jail for a further 10 years? I don't think there's any public interest. I think only revenge is being served by keeping someone in jail like that, in that situation, for a further 10 years, and I believe it would be a gross misuse of justice funds. I would much rather see those funds dedicated to better policing; I would much rather see those funds dedicated to things like a women's crisis centre, second-stage housing for the victims of spousal abuse, to more prosecutorial resources so that crown attorneys can do a better job or more community policing. In other words, there are a number of good public interest factors that far outweigh the revenge that some of the members of the government are talking about.

I want to comment just a bit upon the approach of the member for Dufferin-Peel. The member expressed a lot of emotion in the House today, and that's his right, but I would just say to him, yes, I can point out examples and he can point out examples where some hideous crimes have been perpetrated, but to base a justice system and to base the principles of the justice system on a few hideous crimes which are designed to raise emotion is, I believe, simply headed in the wrong direction. The principles of our justice system should not be based upon the activities of a Homolka, or a Bernardo, or a Clifford Olson. They represent, I would argue, the worst examples. But there

are literally thousands of other cases in our justice system, and we must do justice to all of them. So to argue emotionally from the worst cases, and to argue emotionally that that is the basis upon which we should revisit or rework a principle that has been shown to have good effect in a lot of other cases is, I believe, not very good reasoning.

I want to review just for a moment the actual applications for judicial review. In New Brunswick, there has been one, and in that case the parole eligibility was reduced to 20 years from 25. In Nova Scotia, there has been one, and parole eligibility was reduced from 25 years to 18 years. In Quebec, there has been a total of 28: 14 cases were reduced to 15 years for parole eligibility, four cases were reduced to 16 years, four to 17, one to 18, one to 19, two to 20, one to 22. In Ontario, there have been 16 applications since 1976: one was reduced to 15 years, one was reduced to 16 years, one reduced to 17, one to 18, three to 19, one to 20 and one to 21, and seven were given no reduction at all.

I merely want to say, to conclude my remarks, that it may well be in the interests of justice, and the public interest generally, to review the operations of section 745. When that is done, we should keep in mind that keeping people who were convicted of murder but have shown that they genuinely express remorse and regret, that they have been rehabilitated, that they show they are no threat to public safety and the public interest—there are good grounds for using the judicial review process to examine whether or not a further 10 years of sentence is in the public interest at all. There are good grounds for using those resources which otherwise might be committed to incarceration for things like increasing police budgets, increasing prosecutorial budgets, increasing the kind and the variety of community policing that I believe actually leads to safer communities.

The wrong approach to this is to come at this from a strictly emotional direction which cites two or three very serious crimes and then tries to argue that those two or three crimes ought to be used for the purposes of a general principle which would do injustice to all of the other cases we often find in the criminal justice system.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It's my pleasure to rise this morning in support of Mr Tilson's resolution. As a young lawyer in the early 1970s I moved from the big city of Toronto to the small town of Preston, which is now part of Cambridge. This was a real contrast, I must say, from the big city, in that clients were your friends, not some impersonal file.

It was through my practice that I met the Pelz family, and I consider the Pelz family my friends. Bertha Pelz and her husband raised their family, consisting of five sisters, Liza, Toni, Joy, Nancy, Linda and a son, William. This was an industrious family, a family that was a credit to their community. In due course, Liza married Ronald Dube, and they had a son called Jason.

I'd like to report to you that this family lived happily ever after, but it did not. In 1979 the peace and serenity of this family was shattered permanently. On June 27, 1979, Ronald Dube shot his wife in the back with a shotgun. As she lay on the ground dying, his confession says that she gurgled on her own blood while she repeat-

ed his name over and over again, but that wasn't enough. He then dragged the body to a pigsty to be ravaged by pigs.

In 1979 the hopes and dreams of the Pelz family died by this act of brutality. But justice prevailed and on March 12, 1980, Chief Justice G.T. Evans convicted Dube of first-degree murder, murder in cold blood, murder that was premeditated, and sentenced him to 25 years without parole, with release in the year 2005. At that trial, Mr Dube actually threatened to kill Toni Pelz, one of the members of the Pelz family, because she had adopted the son, Jason, of the marriage of Liza and Dube. At that trial, even the crown attorney told the family, "You better seek protection, because this man is very dangerous." But for 25 years, until the year 2005, they can go about their lives.

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Unfortunately, that's not what happened. Section 745 intervened. Section 745, I believe, is a cruel hoax on an unsuspecting public. We Ontario taxpayers paid for Ronald Dube to make an application under section 745 in 1995, 15 years into his sentence. We paid for the convicted murderer to present his case to a judge and jury. Of course no one represented the Pelz family, no one paid for them to attend the hearing. They did so at their own expense. Nor were they permitted to testify. They were not able to tell their story of how this had changed their lives.

Only Dube testified and now he conveniently forgot his confession. Now he didn't do the killing; it was someone else in his presence. Yes, this convicted murderer walks among us in our society today on unescorted passes and, in three short years, he will be applying for parole. What peace have we left the Pelz family? Where's the justice they deserve? We all want guarantees of safety and protection in our society. This family has bravely told their story to Canada. They've requested the opportunity to attend before the justice committee federally and, to date, have not received that opportunity. When will the Pelz family receive the justice they deserve from our society?

We can help prevent future problems of this kind. We can't help the Pelz family, quite frankly, but we can prevent the same thing happening to the Mahaffys and the Frenches and others who are innocent and suffer at the hands of brutality.

I am requesting that you support this resolution.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise in support of the principle that is presented in front of us today. Very clearly, I think this country is going through a difficult time and a very difficult debate as to where we move with our justice system, a justice system that I agree over the years has been flawed, a justice system that often does not protect the victims, does more to protect the criminals, does more to protect people who inflict the pain rather than the people who receive the pain.

It's a justice system that, in my view, needs to be overhauled at every level of government and needs to put the focus back where it belongs, and that is on the criminals and the people who create mayhem for people, who destroy people's lives and who destroy families.

We've seen it in my own community over the years. We had a situation where Jon Rallo, a city of Hamilton employee at that time, proceeded to murder his young son Jason, his young daughter Stephanie and his wife and has applied a number of times under 745 and is now, as we're aware, living in a halfway house, after serving about 15 years of a life sentence of 25. So it averages out to about five years for the life of young Jason, five years for the life of young Stephanie and five years for his wife's life.

We have seen the murder of Nina de Villiers, a McMaster University student, and we have seen, in the southern Ontario area, the murder of the French and Mahaffy girls, and it is these types of incidents that bring to light the need for some very serious reform in our criminal justice system. I very much believe that life means life. I very much believe that someone who is convicted of first-degree murder and is sentenced to 25 years should serve a 25-year sentence, period, if that is the maximum allowed under our system.

I think there are too many loopholes. I think 745, unfortunately, has been used by the Clifford Olsons and others across this country, has been an abuse and waste of taxpayers' dollars, and it really has continued the insult on the victims, because every time one of these animals applies under 745, you're reliving the tragedy again for that family. You're once again, for that family, bringing back the horror, the difficulties, the pain every single time, and it is unfair. It is reliving the tragedy, it is bringing that tragedy back to their doorstep and to their home again and again and again.

As my colleague mentioned earlier, I would like to see a system in place where, automatically, life means life, 25 years means 25 years. The onus should be the other way. Section 745, on its own, should be eliminated, but there should be an opportunity for a judge—if there is, for example, a woman who after years of an abusive situation, and clearly the evidence is that it was self-defence, is convicted of murder, or clearly the evidence is that she could not escape this abusive situation and she was convicted, that circumstance would be different, obviously, than a Clifford Olson. But that onus should be on the evidence at the trial and it should be placed on the exceptions rather than 745 being the rule, where everyone is eligible for it.

I think it is dangerous the way it is set up. It allows the potential for many of these people to be freed, for many of these people to go out and murder again. Very clearly, anything we can do to push the government to take the right steps and move towards eliminating—745 being tinkered with is not going to be good enough; 745 simply being played with is not going to be good enough. We have to ensure there's a system that does not allow these individuals automatic access to a parole hearing, automatic access to the possibility of being out after 15 years, regardless of how many people they have killed, regardless of the circumstances.

I certainly concur with the work of CAVEAT, Victims of Violence and many other organizations across this province and this country that have urged the federal government to change the legislation, that have worked with this provincial government to help us urge the

federal government change this legislation. I would hope that if we continue to work with CAVEAT, with Victims of Violence and with other groups right across this province and this country, we will get the legislation changed. Let's ensure that finally we have a justice system where victims are treated as victims and criminals are treated as criminals.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to speak to this resolution today. I will be supporting the resolution in an attempt to make Ontario a safer place for our constituents and our children.

Some might say this is a resolution which calls upon the federal government to act on matters that fall outside this Legislature's jurisdiction, but I feel this issue is one of provincial jurisdiction because it directly affects law enforcement and court systems which do fall under provincial control.

What we're talking about here today is a section of the Criminal Code, section 745, which says where an offender has a parole ineligibility period of more than 15 years and the offender has served at least 15 years, which is just 60% of the sentence, the offender can apply to the court for a reduction of the parole ineligibility period.

Part of my support for this resolution comes from the strong feedback I received from constituents as I travelled door to door during last June's election. The attitudes were the same whether it was in the larger communities of Huntsville, Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Midland or in the smaller places like Hekla, Dwight and Victoria Harbour. After speaking to these people, I feel I can safely say one of the major concerns among the public is the criminal justice system and the important issue of public safety.

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I believe people across the province are fed up with reading stories about crimes committed by individuals on parole. When such tragic events occur, they create a sense of fear in communities. They cause people to lose confidence in our justice system. In fact, I believe there's a prevailing sense on the part of the public that an imbalance exists between criminals and victims. It was because the public felt criminals had more rights than victims that our government recently passed a provincial Victims' Bill of Rights. It's unfortunate that this bill of rights was necessary.

It's critical for governments to close openings for killers to earn early parole before they've served a full sentence, which is what section 745 allows. It creates the potential for new victims. It creates a bureaucratic, expensive process which gives convicted murderers an opportunity to get back into the community after serving just 15 years. Of the things the people of Muskoka-Georgian Bay elected me to do, high on the list is the elimination of frivolous processes and the issue of offenders serving partial sentences.

It's my understanding that approximately 15% of the offenders have their parole revoked and an estimated half of those revocations are for committing a criminal offence while on parole. These statistics are cause for concern when considered within the context of section 745 and the first-degree murderers who can benefit from this legal loophole.

It seems unbelievable that it's even up for debate. A first-degree murderer, whether he or she be a serial killer or not, should not be able to demand a judicial review after 15 years of what was supposed to be a minimum 25-year sentence. I believe this section of the law makes a mockery of the original trial and sentencing process.

I'd have to agree with statements made by Liberal MP John Nunziata when he said section 745 does not reflect the views of the vast majority of Canadians. It certainly doesn't reflect the sentiment of my constituents. That's why I'll be voting in support of this resolution put forward by the member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): I welcome an opportunity to rise this morning in support of the bill put forward by the member for Dufferin-Peel. I ask the House to consider a couple of issues that I think are different from those put forward so far.

I first of all recognize that there are two sides to the issue. I remember in 1976 being a young lawyer doing some defence work when this change was introduced, and supporting the idea and the concept. Today, 20 years later, after five years of applications under this particular section, 173 murderers being eligible as of the middle of last year and some 60 reviews having been conducted, and after having spent 11 years on the provincial court bench, I have a little different perspective on the views I held in 1976.

I also would ask you to consider the weakness of the argument that will be made that we should allow the section to stand but that it not apply to certain types of criminals and certain types of people, and of course they're referred to as the Bernardo-like or the Olson-like type of criminal. My point herein is that everyone in 1995 and 1996 in Canada convicted and sentenced to a term of 25 years fits into that category.

I'd ask you to understand a couple of things, what's happening right now in your riding, in every courthouse in this province, and to understand exactly how the judicial system works in this province and just how difficult it is to gain a conviction in Canada today for murder one. You have to understand the pressures on the people working in the crown's office. You have to understand the pressures on the men and women of the bench in this province. Unless you're capable of understanding the inner workings of that system, I don't think you're able to appreciate the public debate which surfaces as a result of the criminal trials which attract media attention.

I would like to pose a couple of questions, the first being the position you might be prepared to adopt today with regard to the infamous Bernardo case if those tapes had not surfaced. If those tapes had been destroyed, would your position be different vis-à-vis the plea bargain of the accomplice of Mr Bernardo? Would that force you to adopt a position different from the one that you have in your mind today?

In relation to another case that drew a lot of attention over the past 12 or 14 months, what if a member of the Simpson defence team were, in a publication or a book, to reveal that the defence team had actually, prior to the trial starting in Los Angeles, offered to cop a plea to a lesser offence and, notwithstanding the refusal of that, we

had the acquittal of Mr Simpson as experienced on national television?

When you consider the implications of those possibilities, you might gain a sense of the pressures of which I speak that are right now in your home town, in the courthouse in the riding that you represent; of the people who are working on behalf of the crown's office for the Attorney General of this province and the problems that they face, the problems that judges face in deciding whether or not to buy into an offer, into a plea bargain. Unless you appreciate the significance and the difficulties that are being handled on a very professional basis in every corner of this province, I don't think you can deal with, in a legitimate manner, the matters inherent in this bill.

What I am suggesting to you is that by adopting the resolution that's before you this morning and by having it referred to a standing committee of this House, there will be an opportunity for members of this House to appreciate the level of professionalism in our justice system, which serves each and every corner of this province on a daily basis. I think that reason and that reason alone is sufficient to authorize the passing of the matter that's before you today, and I urge you to do so.

Mr Hastings: I would briefly like to rise and applaud the member for Dufferin-Peel for his presentation of this initiative to urge the federal government to get rid of section 745.

It was interesting to hear the remarks of the member for Kenora. Talk about trying to place a dollar figure on a life. I couldn't believe he would average it out at about \$50,000. I listened to his remarks with considerable disgust, particularly when he said you could reuse this money for community-based policing. But in point of fact, the member for Rainy River—not Kenora; my apology—was going to be using some of this money for community-based policing to be picking up some of the very people who had violated their parole.

I would urge the members of this House to strongly support the resolution of the member for Dufferin-Peel.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel, you have two minutes.

Mr Tilson: Very briefly, I'd like to thank all members for participating in the debate. We have heard arguments for and against. I won't repeat the arguments for; I have given those, as have other members. I would like to comment briefly on the main opposition to this resolution, which appears to come from the member for Rainy River, who seems to indicate that there are situations when these types of people should be released.

These people are killers. They're evil. When they're sentenced to 25 years after a trial, by a duly constituted trial and sometimes jury, that's the sentence they should receive. Members have referred to situations, the possibility of crimes of passion. We have other charges in the Criminal Code that those offences may be laid under, and generally those types of offences come under those charges. These are for the most evil of all cases.

In this respect, the member for Rainy River talks about how some people should be let out. There's a Calgary Liberal senator, Earl Hastings, who goes so far as to send letters to federal convicts instructing them on how to

prepare for and receive a successful section 745 hearing. He goes on to say, "You've got to express remorse, you've got to apply for legal aid two years before the 15-year mark and develop good interpersonal communication and leadership skills." It just boggles my mind that someone would do that.

There's a lawyer by the name of Stephen Fineberg, a specialist in prison law, who concurs with Senator Hastings. He feels that an offender is in an advantageous position when he can tell the decision-maker that he has already made progress, that it establishes his credibility.

These are concepts to try and get these killers out early and the reason why this resolution was brought: to tell Mr Rock we don't want these killers out in 15 years; we want them to serve the full life sentence.

CANCER PREVENTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will deal first with ballot item number 21, standing in the name of Ms Churley. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Ms Churley has moved private member's notice of motion number 13. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

PAROLE SYSTEM

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 22, standing in the name of Mr Tilson. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Mr Tilson has moved private member's notice of motion number 12. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: We'll deal with the vote first and then we'll listen to your point of order.

CANCER PREVENTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Ms Churley has moved private member's notice of motion number 13. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Arnott, Ted	Ecker, Janet	Miclash, Frank
Baird, John R.	Fisher, Barbara	Murdoch, Bill
Bassett, Isabel	Froese, Tom	Newman, Dan
Boushy, Dave	Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.

Caplan, Elinor	Hampton, Howard	Pettit, Trevor
Castrilli, Annamarie	Kwinter, Monte	Pouliot, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Sampson, Rob
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Shea, Derwyn
Cooke, David S.	Leadston, Gary L.	Wood, Len
Crozier, Bruce	Marland, Margaret	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Stewart, R. Gary
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Stockwell, Chris
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Tilson, David
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Turnbull, David
Danford, Harry	Klees, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ford, Douglas B.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wood, Bob
Fox, Gary	Maves, Bart	Young, Terence H.
Galt, Doug	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	
Gilchrist, Steve	Sheehan, Frank	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 35; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I simply draw to your attention that I believe that before you declared the second resolution, resolution 22, carried, there were five people standing in the House.

The Acting Speaker: I asked for the nays and I asked for the ayes. In my opinion, the ayes have it. I waited for a few seconds and then only two people stood. I then said that the motion carried, and that's the end of it.

We've debated all the issues we had to debate. I will now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orlino): The Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Ontario presented the Minister of Health with a report entitled Answering the Call.

PAIRO visited 65 underserved communities and met with over 300 community representatives across the province. That's consultation.

The report outlined what PAIRO believes are the criteria for successful recruitment and retention of doctors in underserved areas.

Some of the recommendations include: direct contract alternate payment plans, an Ontario-wide physician registry, various infrastructure support mechanisms, expanded medical education opportunities in northern and rural areas, locum improvement programs and enhanced specialist backup support.

I agree with the recommendations of today's report and urge the Minister of Health to act quickly. I also urge the Minister of Health to repeal sections 29.1 through 29.7 of

schedule H of Bill 26—that's the billing number provision. Billing numbers are not a good solution to the problems of physician maldistribution. Billing numbers do create a climate of tension, anger and fear.

I would encourage the minister to read this excellent report from PAIRO and adopt the recommendations of the report, which I believe will solve the problems of doctor shortages in underserved areas across this province.

But as a gesture of goodwill, I would ask the minister to admit that his bullying tactics are the wrong approach. I ask him to repeal the billing number provisions. Since he is not here in the House today for me to ask him a question, I rise for this statement.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I'd like to direct my statement today to Premier Mike Harris. I raise today the issue of the demise of industry in the north at the hands of your government. You're supposed to be a friend of business, of commerce and, being from North Bay, a friend, one would hope, of the north. Not true, Mr Premier. Since your government took office the job loss in the north has escalated and what we are seeing is the death of business and industry in the north and a lack of job creation.

You and the federal government entered into a deal that was termed the best deal in a bad situation and now we have a 15% export tax on Ontario softwood lumber. I asked you in the House recently how many jobs would be lost in the north with this deal and I haven't received an answer as yet.

You are in the process of negotiating the largest giveaway of timber rights and forest management rights in the history of this province to the large forest companies, destroying community forest projects and creating additional job loss in independent logging and small forest companies.

Proposed changes to the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission could bring an end to the dairy industry in my riding of Cochrane North, and the end of norOntair service brings an end to the reliable air service in the north and more job loss.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): It is a pleasure to rise on behalf of all members of the Legislature to announce that this Sunday marks the beginning of a special time in the province of Ontario, National Volunteer Week, from April 21 to 27.

This special week is set aside to thank and honour the many people who donate time, energy and expertise to their fellow citizens and to the causes we all believe in.

The week is also meant to increase public awareness of the vital contribution volunteers make to our communities and to Canadian society as a whole.

Their numbers are impressive: one in three of all Ontarians and close to six million strong across Canada. They are a mosaic of gender, religion, age and ethnicity, connected by their spirit of giving and caring.

Ontario's government recognizes that volunteerism continues to play a vital role in the development of our communities and our province.

During this special week we should join with voluntary organizations in paying tribute to the many volunteers who make outstanding contributions to our communities.

It is important that the efforts of these special citizens are recognized. Today more than ever, we need to recognize the importance of these actions in our communities. During National Volunteer Week, it is our time to say thank you to so many special individuals.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to bring to the government's and the minister's attention another victim of the revolution: April Adderley. She's the mother of two children, 3 and 8 years old. She attends York University. She's a straight-A student. She volunteers at her children's school.

Saturday, she has an interview to get into teachers' college. She has been working very hard and very responsibly to get off family benefits. She has worked hard to raise her children at the same time.

The government's move to take her off welfare, take away her benefits and have her moved to OSAP is going to force her and her children to continue to depend on a life of welfare. April told us that Mike Harris is kicking her in the teeth. She told us that Mike Harris broke the promise he made to her during the campaign to give her a hand up. What this government has done in the changes is given her a hand down and has knocked her down. She is a hardworking individual. She feels she is now being punished by the Harris government for trying to get off welfare. She has no one else in Ontario to support her. She is taking care of herself and her children.

Minister, what do you say to April and others like her who as a result of your change have gone through two or three years of university and now may be forced to quit and rely on welfare for the rest of their lives? Where is that hand up, Minister? Where is that hand up that you promised to April and others during the election, which you've now taken away from her?

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today to revisit the document that was tabled by the government last Thursday where they talk about their business plan. I particularly want to speak to what they're going to do with the Ministry of Labour.

This government of course already has a track record of introducing and passing, without any public consultation whatsoever, the anti-worker Bill 7, where they gutted the employee wage protection program, again made scabbing legal in the province of Ontario, and took away successor rights, an issue which they did not talk about in the campaign and which they had no mandate to do. They've already killed the Workplace Health and Safety Agency. Under Bill 15, they took away workers' rights to 50% representation on the board of the WCB. We also know the Jackson report is out there and it's planning to gut benefits and entitlement that innocent workers injured on the job are entitled to.

Now what do we see in this document? We see an opening of the Occupational Health and Safety Act in the context of saving \$8.2 billion and we see opening up the Employment Standards Act in the context of saving \$2.4 million. We also see closing the ministry library and eliminating the Joint Steering Committee on Hazardous Substances in the Workplace.

The track record is there to look at. The plans for the future are there to look at. Can there be any doubt by anyone in the province of Ontario that this government's agenda is anti-worker and they're going to go after workers' rights until they have none left?

WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Today I'd like to add my congratulations and those of the government to five outstanding women who last evening received Women of Excellence awards from the Chatham-Kent YMCA. This was the first time these awards were presented, and the five recipients were certainly well chosen for the honour.

Delores Shadd was recognized for her outstanding contribution to rural life. As the women's adviser in Ontario for the National Farmers Union, she has attended national and international conferences on women.

Anne Coulter, executive director of family services, Kent, was honoured in the community and volunteer category for her community work on various boards and committees.

The sport, fitness and recreation award went to Shae-Lynn Bourne. She and partner Victor Kraatz have been Canadian ice dance champions for four years, are holders of the bronze medal in the World Figure Skating Championships, and will be competing in the 1998 Olympics.

Internationally heralded country music singer Michelle Wright received the award for her contributions to art and culture.

Ida Goodreau, formerly of Ridgetown, received a business, professions and trades award. The first female executive at Union Gas, she is now CEO of the Tasman Pulp and Paper Co in New Zealand.

I'm sure all members join me in applauding the achievements of these Women of Excellence and the Chatham-Kent YMCA for honouring them.

1340

SCIENCE NORTH

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This government's assault on Science North is beyond belief. Their record of events and reductions speaks volumes.

In September, Science North's base operating grant was cut by 3%. In November, they experienced another 7% cut, for a total reduction of 10% over the course of this fiscal year. In January, Science North's outreach grant from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Northern Development and Mines was not renewed and, as a result, Science North's operating grant suffered total cuts equalling 17.4%. No other tourism attraction in Ontario has experienced such a deep cut. The most recent blow to this northern attraction is another \$147,500 cut from the fiscal year next year.

The cuts already announced mean: seven fewer full-time positions; five contract positions not renewed; hiring of summer students cut by 10%; outreach services to the northwest decreased by 50%; discovery camps eliminated; the Path of Discovery tour eliminated; teacher workshops to enhance science education eliminated. The north is worried about these cuts and this government's direction with regard to Science North.

Will the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines meet with us, as requested? We've sent you letters. We haven't got a response. Do you care? Will you meet with us? Will you share our concerns and will you be sympathetic?

CROWN LAND CAMPING FEES

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Terrace Bay in the great riding of Lake Nipigon is home to the North of Superior Marina Marketing Association. This group is dedicated to promoting the North Shore of Lake Superior as a cruising destination for boaters, particularly American boaters.

Now the Ministry of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines plans to charge a crown land camping permit fee to non-resident boaters who drop anchor in Canadian waters. Last summer, several American boaters were stopped along the shore of Lake Superior by MNR and told that they were expected to pay this fee. Interestingly enough, it is only being collected north of the French River. Americans cruising in Georgian Bay and Americans cruising in Muskoka will pay no such fee. Any enforcement of this discriminatory regulation will obviously destroy the economic development and marketing efforts of communities in my riding to promote the North Shore as the best and most obvious place to do boating in the province of Ontario.

I do hope that we will be treated fairly. This statement asks the government that competition be allowed. We feel that is commonsensical. Let's level the playing field.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I have a point of personal explanation, Mr Speaker: This morning during private members' business debate on ballot item number 21 on the subject of cancer prevention, a subject too close to my immediate family, I closed my comments with these words:

"Frankly, I think you'd have to be out of your mind to vote against this resolution."

I apologize to my colleagues on all sides of this House for that comment. I believe in apologizing when I'm wrong.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Today is the last day for the current group of pages. I know all members will join with me in thanking the pages for the dedicated service to us members during their term here.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I also observe we have a former member of the Legislature in the east gallery, Mr James Taylor, member for Prince Edward-Lennox.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CORPS D'ÉLITE ONTARIO AWARDS

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): It is my privilege to welcome three special visitors to the Legislature today. With us in the members' gallery are this year's recipients of the Corps d'Élite Ontario Award, our province's highest distinction in the field of recreation. They are Wesley Luke Ogden of Welland, Jocelyn Palm of Willowdale, and Dorothy Walter of Toronto.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Corps d'Élite Ontario Award, which honours outstanding recreation volunteers and professionals from across Ontario. On the eve of National Volunteer Week, which begins Sunday, April 21, it is wonderful to be able to recognize and honour people who donate time and energy to share the joy of sports and recreation with everyone, from children to seniors. This government acknowledges the vital contribution that volunteers make to our communities and to society as a whole.

Participation in sports and recreational activities benefits us all. It promotes a healthy lifestyle and contributes to our physical and emotional wellbeing. Participation builds stronger communities, bringing the diverse members of our society together in pursuit of common interests. It is a significant factor in youth crime prevention and in enhancing academic performance.

Volunteerism is also an essential component of a strong recreation system. We know, for example, that there are about 660,000 sport and recreation volunteers in Ontario. Together, these volunteers spend \$300 million each year in out-of-pocket expenses. This is in addition to the \$2.3 billion which is the estimated value of their labour.

The 1995 recipients of the Corps d'Élite Ontario Award have recognized the tremendous value of these benefits and have devoted countless hours of time and effort in both professional and volunteer capacities. They have demonstrated leadership, determination and commitment in working with local, provincial, national and international organizations to improve our recreation and sports system and strengthen its ability to address community needs and concerns.

For the energy, creativity and perseverance they have brought to this task, for their personal sacrifice and their sense of duty they deserve both our gratitude and our respect.

Later this afternoon, these three distinguished individuals will receive their award in a ceremony presided over by the Honourable Henry N.R. Jackman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. I would now ask that Wesley Luke Ogden, Jocelyn Palm and Dorothy Walter stand in the members' gallery while the honourable members please join me in showing our appreciation to these special Ontarians and to all the recreational professionals and volunteers who contribute so profoundly to the quality of life in this province.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Wesley Luke, Jocelyn and Dorothy, let me congratulate you on doing something

that doesn't happen here very often: me agreeing with the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Certainly I too, on behalf of my fellow colleagues in the Liberal Party and caucus, would like to congratulate you and thank you.

Having been a teacher for 31 years, I like to try to relate every experience to an educational experience, so let me address for a second a few remarks to the pages, who will be travelling back to their home towns and cities after today, the David Hamiltons of the world, who will be going back to Sudbury, to St Francis school, and the other students who will be going back to their grade 7 and 8 classrooms.

Please, you may have seen, over the course of your stay here, things that you don't want to bring back as an example, but when you look at those three individuals in the gallery, I want you to remember, that is the reason your parents have allowed you to share in this experience. They want you to receive the example which will best be able to allow you the opportunities to contribute to society. These people have demonstrated how important it is, one, to make an individual and a personal difference, but two, how important it is to be giving of oneself in order to share their experiences, their expertise and their abilities to communicate with others so that they can make others make a difference. That is the lesson that I hope we would be learning from these three very, very dedicated and talented Ontarians. These people want you and all Ontarians to understand that it is important to contribute, it is important to share, it is important to say, "I have time for my fellow human being because I care about my fellow human being."

1350

The reward you will receive today is certainly prestigious, but in fact, because of your years of volunteer service and because of your dedication, you know the biggest rewards that you've received have been the way you have affected the lives of those people you've come in contact with, and for that reason, I congratulate you and all the Liberal members congratulate you. You are deserving of your award.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I want to separate my comments into two parts: One, to praise the program and to congratulate the recipients, and the second part is to attack the government.

On the first point, we have a long history and tradition of strong leadership and excellent programming. Sports and recreation contribute to the quality of life, as the minister has said. We agree with that. It contributes to healthy living for individuals and communities because it reduces the Ontario health care budget, and we agree with that. It has tremendous economic impact in the province, and we also agree with that. She also adds another important point that I agree with, and that is, it's a significant factor in youth crime prevention in enhancing academic performance, and we agree with all of that.

As we do that, we thank and congratulate those individuals who take time from their many other activities of life to make this kind of contribution in sports and recreation that we believe contributes to healthy living, and we congratulate them for all of that. But there is an

underbelly to this announcement and that's what I want to speak to as my second part of this announcement.

The second part relates to the budget that goes in supporting provincial sport and recreation activities. That budget was \$16 million or so and they have cut 35.2% out of that budget. That's the underbelly of this announcement. So while on the one hand we praise individuals for contributing to sports and recreation and we thank them, because it's an important part of citizenship; while on the one hand we say that and we say how important it is to our economy, to our healthy living because it reduces the health care cost and it contributes to the quality of life in general—while we say that, how can we take over \$6 million out of that budget for sports and recreation? I think it's wrong. The future of sports and recreation is being threatened by the actions of this government. Sports and recreation groups, professional staff, coaches and participants are very fearful that the budget cuts will affect the future of their sports.

So while I thank and congratulate these three people, recipients of the corps d'élite program, Wesley Luke Ogden, Jocelyn Palm and Dorothy Walter, the people of Ontario, I believe, deserve better from this government and this ministry as it relates particularly to support for provincial sports and recreational activities.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I too want to extend congratulations to Ms Walter and Ms Palm, and especially I want to speak about Wes Ogden because Wes Ogden, of course, is the dean of recreation in Welland, down there in Niagara region. Wes Ogden built the Welland recreation department. He, as a member of a team in the city of Welland, worked with a succession of city councils. I was fortunate enough to be in one of those councils from 1985 to 1988, and I tell you, Wes Ogden is the type of committed person who did not know work hours, did not know workdays of the week. It was a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day operation. He built that recreation department from the ground up and developed a team of people around him, volunteers and other staff people, who were committed and dedicated not only to Wes but to recreation in the city as a whole.

One can't speak too much about his contribution to important civic events like the Welland Rose Festival, and the fact that Wes Ogden would be out there at 6 am Sunday morning, Saturday morning, whenever he was called upon, providing the leadership and doing the grunt work as well.

I can't think of anybody who is a more fitting recipient of this award. It's not insignificant at all that it was the Ontario Municipal Recreation Association that nominated Wes. That illustrates the high regard in which he's held not only in his own community, among the citizens of that good part of Ontario, but by Ontarians and even people beyond Ontario as well.

I congratulate all three recipients, but I make special note of Wes Ogden, a most fitting recipient and one of those people about whom Wellanders are extremely proud. God bless you, Wes.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The time has expired. Oral questions.

ATTENDANCE OF PREMIER AND MINISTERS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I understand the Premier was scheduled to be present in question period today and is in the building. I would like to request a recess of five minutes so that you might request the presence of the Premier for question period.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, on the point of order, I certainly can speak for our caucus in that we would support the recess.

I think it's important to understand. I have a document here called the Premier's itinerary: "Thursday, April 18, 1:30 pm, question period," crossed out at 11:30 am this morning; he would no longer be in attendance. It's clear that the Premier was absolutely embarrassed by the evidence that he is so deeply in the public trough that he's running away from the accountability—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. I have no jurisdiction to see that anybody is here. As far as I'm concerned, if you want to stand down your first question and go on to the second question, that would be appropriate. But if you want to insist, we would have to have unanimous consent if you wanted to stand down and have a recess. Do we have unanimous consent? We don't have unanimous consent.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, I rise on what I believe to be a legitimate point of privilege. Yesterday afternoon in this chamber, the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development and Mines was asked a question by my colleague from Sudbury East. The minister gave an answer that was self-serving, smug, and quite frankly insulting to all northern members and to our constituents up north.

It is becoming a pattern that when a minister gets into some difficulty on one day during question period, they're absent the following day. That is completely unacceptable and an abuse of the privileges of everybody in this assembly.

The Speaker: The same point of privilege?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, there are always legitimate reasons for ministers to be absent from time to time, and we certainly expect that's going to be the case. No doubt someone will have an explanation for some and it may be very legitimate and we would accept that.

Today there are several contentious issues that involve ministers Harris, Eves, Elliott, Villeneuve, Hodgson, Palladini, Snobelen and Wilson, all very key ministers. We would like to be able to ask these ministers questions. You, as a member of the Legislature, would know that these issues are very current and important and it's the urgent business of the day. We simply ask your assistance in trying to have the ministers who are able to be here to be with us this afternoon so that we can ask legitimate questions and have them explain the policies.

The Speaker: The leader of the official opposition, on what?

Mrs McLeod: I believe it has been placed as a point of privilege, but I wish to place a point of order for your consideration, Mr Speaker. I place the point of order

under section 33(a) of the standing rules of the Legislative Assembly. You'll be aware, Mr Speaker, that these are the rules in which the orders of procedure of the day are set out, the oral question period clearly being set out in terms and conditions under which we operate. "Questions on matters of urgent public importance may be addressed to the ministers of the crown...."

1400

As my colleague has said, there are often occasions on which specific ministers have to be away from this place; we understand that, and we do not question it. We do have a concern when the Premier, who is accountable to this House, as is each minister, reschedules his schedule in order to not be in question period when it was quite clearly possible for him to be here today. I believe that is an offence not only to the privileges of members but to the orders of this place.

We came into the House today with questions that we consider, in accordance with this order of procedure, to be of urgent public importance, questions that we had intended to address. If you wish, Mr Speaker, I would be prepared to table with you the questions so that you know that we are genuinely concerned about not being able to hold specific ministers accountable on these questions, questions for the Premier, questions for the Minister of Education, for the Minister of Health, for the Minister of Environment—

The Speaker: Order. You made your point. I've heard your point of order. I have no jurisdiction over cabinet ministers that are here or cabinet ministers that are not here. It's my duty, as Chair, to call the proceedings of the day. The next order of business is question period.

Mrs McLeod: What's the point of proceeding with question period? We cannot proceed.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a point of privilege—

The Speaker: A point of privilege is a matter of a very important issue. Most times when we used to have points of privilege here with previous Speakers, there was usually written consent of the Speaker of a point of privilege. A point of order is different than a point of privilege. On a point of order?

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, I believe this is a point of privilege, or did you just rule that I couldn't raise a point of privilege? I feel that this is a very important point of privilege, and I would ask that you listen to me for a few minutes and then determine. I have a very important matter to raise here today. Hear me out for a second. Yesterday I raised an issue with the Minister of Environment and Energy about a potentially very serious heavy water spill from the Pickering nuclear plant. The minister did not assure me or the public—

The Speaker: You don't have a point of order. I can't help if the minister does not give you a satisfactory answer. That has nothing to do with me.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Where is she?

The Speaker: That's not my jurisdiction to know where the minister is. My jurisdiction is to run the routine proceedings of the day. The next order of business is oral question period.

Mrs McLeod: In the absence of the Premier, I would then, of necessity, place my question to the parliamentary assistant to the Premier; I believe that to be the member for Durham-York.

Mr Speaker, I will draw your attention to standing order 33(h), in which "Parliamentary assistants may answer for their ministers...when authorized by the Premier." I would ask you, therefore, to determine, if it is the member for Durham-York, if I'm accurate in that, whether or not she has been authorized by the Premier to respond to my question today.

The Speaker: I have not been made aware that she's been advised to that effect.

Ms Lankin: Ask her.

The Speaker: That's not my duty to determine. No.

Ms Lankin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to request unanimous consent for the member for Durham-York to answer the question in the absence of the Premier.

The Speaker: We do not have unanimous consent. Question period. The leader of the official opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, you can appreciate the dilemma of members of the House if ministers are not present and the Premier is not present to respond to our questions, and if under the rules of procedure of this House we are permitted to address our questions to the parliamentary assistants, who are holding positions of responsibility and receiving remuneration for those positions of responsibility, if we cannot present our questions—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Only if it's referred from the Premier or the minister that they can answer it, and I haven't heard that any minister has indicated that their parliamentary assistant can answer it.

Do you have a question?

Mrs McLeod: I'm asking for clarification for my point of order, because my question is for the parliamentary assistant. I'm asking you—

The Speaker: You can't ask a parliamentary assistant a question. I have made it clear that if the Premier approves of it, then so be it. But you—

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I'm asking you to tell me what procedure I follow.

The Speaker: No. It's not for me to answer questions. I'm not here to answer questions.

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm asking you, for future reference, since the Premier did not know that I was going to ask him a question, how would he authorize the answer unless he authorized the parliamentary assistant to respond in his place to any question today? What procedure should I follow to ensure that in the absence of a minister, a parliamentary assistant can be authorized by the Premier to respond to our legitimate questions?

The Speaker: The rule book says that if the minister, in his or her discretion, declines to answer any question, they can, only if the Premier or the minister refers that question to them.

Mrs McLeod: With due respect, you have cited the wrong rule in terms of applying it to my point of order. I'm referring to page 26, section 33(h). There is not an opportunity for a minister to decline to answer a question that I have not placed because the minister is not present. If the minister or the Premier were present, I could place the question and they could decline to answer; the parliamentary assistant could decline. But I am asking what I have to do to get a parliamentary assistant to be authorized to answer my question.

The Speaker: Section (h) says, "Parliamentary assistants may answer for their ministers only when authorized by the Premier." Well, the Premier's not here.

Oral question period. Do you have a question?

PREMIER'S RIDING ASSOCIATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Yes, I do have a question, and I had hoped the Premier had made some arrangements for my question to be answered. Given the fact that this has not occurred, according to your judgement, I assume then that the Chair of Management Board is the acting Premier in the House today.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): We're already into routine proceedings and we're into a question.

Ms Lankin: Mr Speaker, it is with respect to question period. You just called question period, and I wonder if you could restore the time—

The Speaker: No. The leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, I very much regret that the Premier has put you in the position of having to answer this question, but I am going to place the question nevertheless.

The reason I regret having to place this question to the minister rather than to the Premier or to someone authorized by the Premier to speak on his behalf is that it's a question which deals directly with the Premier's personal integrity. I think it's unfortunate that the Premier does not seem to feel it necessary to be here to answer it himself.

Yesterday, before the Premier left this place, he told the House that his rule for staff and personal expenses was the following: "Be up front about it, be public about it, put the expenses there and be prepared to answer for them."

Minister, can you then tell me why the Premier did not inform the Integrity Commissioner that Conservative donors were buying him a golf and country club membership, paying his Albany Club bills, and supplying him with an additional housing allowance?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): What are your expenses?

The Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mrs McLeod: Can you tell me why he would not have disclosed this when he was clearly required by the law to do so?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Obviously, I'm not aware of all the details to the same extent that the Premier would be, but I do know that the proper disclosures were made to the

extent that the Commission on Election Finances, for example, has reviewed and authorized any spending that's taken place and has given full approval. So in that regard, all the expenditures that were made were up front, were visible, were entirely legal, nothing wrong with any of the expenses. The riding association, in addition, had authorized any of the expenses. These expenses were handled properly through the Commission on Election Finances and through the local riding association.

1410

Mrs McLeod: The reason we need to know why the Premier did not inform the Integrity Commissioner—and I'm being very specific about where this disclosure should have been made—about those particular perks is because the Members' Integrity Act is very specific. It states, "A member of the assembly shall not accept a fee, gift or personal benefit that is connected directly or indirectly with the performance of his or her duties of office."

It was very clear yesterday that the Premier received the free golf club membership because he is indeed the member for Nipissing. Given that the golf club membership is a gift and personal benefit and cannot in any way be construed as a legitimate business expense related to the performance of duties, I have to ask you how you can explain how the Premier could accept such a gift when the Members' Integrity Act clearly states it's wrong to do so and why the Premier did not at the very least disclose these gifts and perks to the Integrity Commissioner.

Hon David Johnson: I'll simply restate that the money involved was money collected through the local riding association, money given by private individuals, by the private sector, of their own free will, not involving taxpayers' money but donations from individuals and corporations. The riding association has considered these matters and given approval—fully visible, fully authorized. The elections finance commission has fully scrutinized this money and has given its full approval. There's nothing untoward, nothing that has not been up front, nothing that has not been visible with regard to the handling of this matter.

Mrs McLeod: The minister should be aware that we've reviewed the public disclosure statements the Premier has filed with the Integrity Commissioner, and nowhere did we find that Mike Harris received a free golf and country club membership, nowhere was it listed that donors paid for Mike Harris's use of the Albany Club, and nowhere was the housing top-up recorded. In fact, under the section "Gifts and Personal Benefits," the disclosure statement says "Nil."

Minister, will you acknowledge that despite what the Premier said yesterday about being open and upfront about these perks, the reason they were not listed in the disclosure statements was because the Premier kept this information from the Integrity Commissioner? And do you not think those gifts and benefits should be disclosed to the Integrity Commissioner immediately?

Hon David Johnson: What I think is that the Premier has chosen to go a route that most taxpayers would support, in that the expenses he has incurred and any money that's been involved—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Oakwood is out of order.

Hon David Johnson: Some members of this Legislature, I might say, choose to bury expenses within their budgets that are directly funded through this Legislature and through the taxpayers of the province. The Premier, if you review the various accounts of the members in this House, has one of the lower amounts of budgets of all the members of this Legislature. And it's his view that taxpayers should not be footing the bill for many of the items other members of this Legislature apparently think are okay.

The Premier has had certain expenses reimbursed through his association. The association has agreed to that; they have authorized that. The elections finance commission has authorized that and fully scrutinized it. As a result, I think there's been a saving to the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question. The member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The Chair of Management Board has an excellent sense of humour. I want to commend him on that.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for my friend the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who is now going to ensure that people will be walking down the fairways of this province with a bottle of beer in their hand. But it has to do with liquor outlets.

Minister, this week in response to my colleague the member for Essex South, a question he asked you in the House regarding the abandonment of the LCBO in favour of private liquor stores, you stated, "I believe a private system probably could do a better job of checking on the sale of liquor to younger people than the public system is now." That's quite an incredible answer. When pressed by the media later, you said: "I just have a suspicion. I have no numbers. I was just speaking anecdotally."

Isn't it true that you have no proof at all that LCBO handles the restriction of sale of liquor to minors in a less satisfactory way than private operators? And isn't it true that you're just scrambling for excuses to dump the LCBO in favour of privately owned and privately operated liquor outlets?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): No, that's not true.

Mr Bradley: You have friends of the Conservative government in Alberta lined up to get their paws on the liquor outlets of that province. I know that's not what the minister has in mind in Ontario, but there's just a suspicion out there that there are a lot of people pressuring the minister and the government to turn those sales over to those private interests.

Minister, the Solicitor General, an individual for whom I have a good deal of respect and who has responsibility for policing in the province, showed no enthusiasm at all for your proposal to privatize liquor sales in Ontario. He is likely aware that in the United States, in many cases, the sale of liquor in privately owned outlets has proven

to be a system plagued by armed robberies, the selling of booze to minors, unchecked quality of the product sold, and the sale of liquor to people in no condition to handle more.

Why don't you abandon your ideological obsession with privatizing everything that is now in the public domain? Why don't you keep a proven, safe, secure and successful operation for the people of this province?

Hon Mr Sterling: I have no obsession. We are going to look at privatization as a possibility. No decisions have been made on that matter at this point.

Mr Bradley: The minister has clearly changed his tune since earlier in the week when he was waxing eloquent about the advantages of privatizing the sale of liquor in the province.

The people who are concerned are the people involved in the wine industry and the grape industry in this province, people such as those involved with the Wine Council of Ontario, who say that a number of policies which underpin the Ontario wine industry would be vulnerable if you were to take the step of privatizing the LCBO, and that given how closely NAFTA and GATT agreements are monitored by wine-producing nations, the Ontario government would have little room to implement new measures if a privatized system provided undue benefit to foreign producers at the expense of the Ontario wine industry.

Do you not understand that if you turn the liquor sales in this province, along with wine, over to the private sector, away from the LCBO, we lose the one tool we have, the best tool we have, to assist our farmers and to assist our wine makers in having a successful industry?

Hon Mr Sterling: Certainly I understand that, and that's why I'm working with the Wine Council of Ontario. We have promised that before any privatization initiative would be undertaken, a full consultation would go on with regard to their interests in this matter. We're very cognizant of them, very appreciative of the wine industry and its growth in Ontario over the past 10 years. In fact, we hope to improve their situation, because they have shown a lot of leadership, they've won some recent prizes with regard to some of their wines. We're very proud of what they're doing and very supportive of what they're doing.

PREMIER'S RIDING ASSOCIATION

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I also have a question to the acting Premier, and I also have a copy of the Premier's disclosure statement to the Integrity Commissioner. I might remind the acting Premier, you were here when Mr Harris used to lecture everybody else in the place about being up front, honest and increasing the integrity of politicians.

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I'm looking at this document right now, and under the income section, it has listed for Mr Harris's income Legislative Assembly indemnities and interest on a mortgage, and under gifts and personal benefits, nothing, "Nil."

I would like to ask the acting Premier, how can he possibly say in this Legislature, in view of the evidence

that has been tabled here yesterday, that the Premier has complied with the Members' Integrity Act that he passed in this assembly?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'll simply reiterate again that the Premier has made this whole process visible. It has been processed through the Commission on Election Finances, through his own riding association.

The Premier's overall expenses, I might add, in this Legislature, of all the members of this Legislature, the bill that's paid directly by the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, is one of the lower bills of any of the members of this Legislature.

I can only say that I'll quote from the North Bay Nugget, that obviously the riding association felt these were legitimate political expenses. So did the Ontario election finances commission, which monitors riding associations and candidates, and it felt, according to the North Bay Nugget newspaper in its editorial dated Thursday, April 18, that this is all aboveboard and all visible and nothing untoward.

Mr Cooke: The evidence is very clear. We're not talking about the election expenses act. No one has made an accusation here that that law has been broken. What we're saying is that the integrity law has been broken by the prime minister of this province.

I would like to ask the acting Premier, is it now not absolutely clear that since the Premier did not declare this amount of money as income with the Integrity Commissioner, he would also not have declared it as income with the federal income tax, and that it would now become clear the Premier has broken the integrity act and the income tax laws of this land?

Hon David Johnson: I think what is clear is that the funding that's been involved with the Premier has saved the taxpayers dollars. Instead of coming out of the direct budget of the Legislature and of the province of Ontario, the funding has been handled through the local riding association, and according to the election finances commission, this has been authorized and fully scrutinized. If the member opposite feels there's anything that's untoward, then I assume the member opposite would take the appropriate action, but clearly the election finances commission doesn't think so, nor does the local association which is footing the bill think so, so the member opposite—it's a democratic society—is free to pursue the matter.

Mr Cooke: The Premier's accountant is also the riding association treasurer, so I can hardly—some accountability there.

Yesterday the Premier said in this place that his income tax returns are nobody's business, so hardly is that a very transparent process.

I'd like to ask you about another of your members on exactly the same issue. The member for Markham also, he and his wife, received considerable funds from their riding association. I also have his disclosure statement: "Income: Ontario Legislative Assembly indemnities; Tsubouchi and Nichols, professional income; town of Markham, councillor's salary." "Gifts and personal benefits: Nil."

Is it not now also clear that the member for Markham has broken the income tax laws and the integrity law, and are you prepared to announce today that your government will be launching an investigation to make sure that any laws that have been broken, there will be remedies, and that if there are laws that have been broken, there will be resignations?

Hon David Johnson: I think that question with regard to the expenses of the member for Markham should more directly be posed to the member for Markham, but I will say that this government, yes, is fully committed to enforcing the laws and to pursuing justice. I think that's very evident, that that's a basic premise and a basic characteristic of this particular government, but I think the member opposite should be sure of his facts, sure of his allegations because, yes, it's a newspaper report. Allegations are made on the basis of assumptions and interpretations of newspaper reports. I think we would want more facts and I would be very convinced that the member for Markham has followed all of the proper rules and regulations pertaining to expenses and pertaining to this House.

GENERAL MOTORS OF CANADA

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. General Motors is Canada's most profitable company: \$1.4 billion in profits last year and \$1 billion in profits the year before. Let me put that in an international context.

This year GM made 20% of its worldwide profits here in Canada, with only 5% of its workforce. There was 26% return to its shareholders on its Canadian investment. This superprofitable company is reacting to this good fortune by announcing that it is going to sell off two of its profitable Canadian plants, the trim plant in Windsor—there are about 1,300 jobs there, as you would know—and the fabrication plant in Oshawa, where there are about 2,200 jobs.

That means there are more than 3,000 families who will now be worried about their future in these communities. That's going to add to the lack of consumer confidence and the lack of business confidence which are really sapping the energy out of our economy, in addition to your government's announcements of tens of thousands of layoffs in the public sector.

When he was asked his opinion of this, the Premier said he thought this was good news. Minister, how much of this Tory kind of good news can the Ontario economy stand? Is this large-scale job shedding by profitable corporations going to be the Tory good news for the economy from now until the end of your term of office?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to say that I don't believe our Premier would ever say that was good news. I take exception to that comment.

General Motors has made a business decision to sell its two facilities, one in Windsor and one in Oshawa, and I think it is up to General Motors to decide how they run their business, not for our government to tell them how they should run their business. They are viable operations, I might say, and we are very confident that a buyer will be found for each of these operations.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Put the sign down, please.

Ms Lankin: Show the minister opposite, if he can't read it.

"Premier Lauds GM Selloff: 'General Motors' decision to sell parts plants in Windsor and Oshawa is good news,' Premier Mike Harris says." On the day GM announced this so-called good news, many of the workers in the plant received the company publication that's called GM Today. In that there's a photograph across the front page of the publication that shows the workers from the Windsor trim plant. It praises them for achieving the ISO 9002 certification, becoming the first of Delphi's division in North America to be a recipient of this significant quality standard.

The plant manager says, "This is a tremendous boost and a deserved reward for our employees who've worked very hard to achieve this." They also got the GM Mark of Excellence Award and the federal government's Canadian Award for Business Excellence.

Minister, we're talking here about a top-quality workforce, an impressive record of achievement, an impressive record of a profit. These workers contributed to that, sir. They did everything they were told to make their company more profitable, more competitive and to secure their jobs for the future, and to what end?

Minister, we understand that you're working with GM in order to find buyers for the plants in Oshawa and in Windsor. Why don't you get it? Why aren't you working with General Motors to help them understand that if they're making \$1.4 billion of profits here in Canada, they should be giving us more jobs, creating more employment opportunities, not closing, moving and selling off the jobs to the highest bidders?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'd like to assure the member that we know there are some jobs involved here and we're going to work with General Motors to make sure a buyer is located for both of these factories, as I've said before. I think GM has recognized workers' skills and I'm sure a subsequent buyer will recognize those as well.
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Ms Lankin: Minister, this is about your responsibility for the economy here in Ontario and for creating jobs in Ontario and for workers in Ontario. You have a responsibility to them, not just to the businesses in Ontario. It would be bad enough if these were the only General Motors jobs at risk, but earlier this year the company announced it wanted to outsource 508 jobs from its other Oshawa plant. General Motors also announced a few weeks ago that 750 axle production jobs at St Catharines are being moved to the United States, and this latest announcement in Oshawa and Windsor is just the last straw. Your government is supporting GM's outsourcing strategy. It's pretty clear from your comments.

Minister, with your government's cuts to welfare, cancelling the pay equity proxy for the lowest-paid women workers, freezing the minimum wage and this shameful defence of the selloff of high-quality industrial jobs as good news, it's pretty clear that your strategy is to move us to a low-wage economy. Does this government really believe that profitable corporations are acting responsibly when they kill hundreds, even thousands of good jobs in Ontario? Is this common sense or just common greed?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'd like to say again that I believe that quotation is out of context. That article said it would be good news for workers if it saves the jobs. That's all I have to say about that.

Ms Lankin: That's not true. Read the article.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Let me just come back to you. I think you are not the one who should be preaching to us about integrity and good judgement. I refer to you something that you're very responsible for, OBI, one of the biggest mistakes ever made by a government. It was.

Ms Lankin: Where are you saving jobs, Minister?

Hon Mr Saunderson: It can maintain jobs at a big expense. All I can say to you is that it was very bad judgement to ever get involved with that in the first place.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, one of your mandates is to protect the consumers in this province. All across Ontario over the last two or three months we've seen the price of gasoline increase almost on a daily basis. It's gone up almost 20% on a litre over the last couple of months, and people feel they're being ripped off, gouged by the big oil companies.

In opposition you were very vociferous in defending the consumers in this ripoff, but there's been nothing but silence on this ripoff by the oil companies since you've become minister. Why the silence? Why aren't you standing up? Why aren't you confronting the big oil companies and saying, "Stop the gouging"?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'm surprised that I get a question from the Liberals on this matter. The federal Liberal government is responsible for competition policy in this country. Go and talk to your cousins up in Ottawa. We're sick and tired of increases in Ottawa for gas prices, and your federal cousins are doing nothing about it; they talk, they talk, they talk.

Mr Colle: Yesterday the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism said that here in Canada we had the best and most competitive oil and gasoline prices in the world. He seemed to be praising the federal government, but when you were in opposition, you did not say the same thing that you're saying now. You said it was a provincial responsibility, that it had a role to play in protecting the consumer.

Why, now that you're in government, have you abandoned the consumer? Why are you treating the big oil companies with kid gloves? Why are you now blaming and whining that it's Ottawa's fault? Why are you not fulfilling your mandate and your role to protect consumers from this gigantic gouging at every gas pump and every town and city across Ontario? Stop passing the buck.

Hon Mr Sterling: I can't recall the exact situation that was involved before, when I was in opposition, but when I was in opposition I asked a question about gas prices and was told that was a responsibility of the federal government. I now see the wisdom in that answer.

MINISTER'S RIDING ASSOCIATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Minister of Community and Social Services. In light of the answer from the Chair of Management Board, I want to place this question to the minister. It seems that your family received \$7,607 from your riding association or, to put it another way, enough money to provide social assistance to a single employable person for more than a year—14½ months. I wonder if the minister recalls when he said to reporters last fall, when he was talking about his 21.6% cut to the poorest people in our province, "When you've got no money, you've got no money and you've got to make do with what you do." Can the minister explain why he's willing to dish out this kind of gratuitous advice to the poorest people in the province when it's obvious he doesn't take it himself?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): I certainly welcome the opportunity to answer this question now, because the member for Windsor-Riverside somehow decided not to direct the question to me but rather the Chairman of Management Board. It saves me from standing up on a point of personal privilege later on.

I think we should do some research here and take a look and see what you guys have done in terms of your election expenses. I can't believe that none of you has ever had a barbecue or a thank you for your volunteers.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): My riding association is broke, David.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Is that right? I don't see everybody nodding their heads or waving their heads over there. I think we'd better take a good look at all this stuff. These were legitimate campaign expenses in order for me to get elected. I was accountable to my association, which approved these expenses, by the way. You know what? I got elected. I had a plurality of 27,000 people.

Mr Wildman: In my experience—unfortunately, I suppose—I tend to end up giving money to my riding association, as many other contributors do; I don't get money from them. I wonder if the minister thinks it is appropriate to receive funds in this way. He mentioned the barbecue, which I understand was \$2,000 out of the \$7,000. He got dry cleaning services and so on, or whatever it was, whatever he got.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): If he declared it, we would know what it was.

Mr Wildman: I'm a little at a disadvantage as to knowing what the other \$5,000 was spent on, since the minister did not state what it was in the member's public disclosure statement filed with the Integrity Commissioner. Under gifts and personal benefits—personal benefits—it says "Nil." Can the minister explain why he did not report this in his disclosure statement?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, we've got the leader of the third party embellishing again. No, there's no dry cleaning. Can you substantiate this, or is this another one of your—

Mr Wildman: We are asking what it is. What is it?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: You're the guys saying dry cleaning; you tell me where that is. Baloney. This is

absolutely ridiculous. These are legitimate election expenses. You know what? I'd like to see, for example, the leader of the third party justify his election expenses. Did you not go to any riding functions? Did you not go to any fund-raisers? Did you not have any type of appearances at all?

I don't know. He's waving his head over there, but gee whiz, all I say can is—talk about dry cleaning, what about your leader? Heck, your leader, what did he get? According to the *Globe and Mail*, Bob Rae received clothing subsidies close to \$2,300 in 1995 and over \$3,100—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Would the House come to order. New question. The member for Kitchener.

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WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. It is my understanding that you have not renewed the mandate for the Ontario Advisory Council on Women's Issues in your business plan for 1996-97 and I was wondering how you might consult with, receive information and receive advice from the women of Ontario.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): It's a fact that over the years, since 1973, we've had advisory committees on women's issues here in the province which have provided us with good direction and certainly recommendations on issues of great concern to women. In looking at our business plan for the next year, we considered those reports. We also considered the advice of women, and that was that they did want more direct contact with the minister. We spent the last nine months consulting broadly with them. They appreciated those consultations and we've adopted that method into the way we will get advice in the future—not just that way, but many ways.

I think we've been well served over the past, and the women who have advised us in the past year are interested in continuing with the advice they have given us. We're most appreciative of the direction they gave us and of their hard work. We will consult directly in six regional conferences over the next two years and I'm looking forward to leading those consultations.

Mr Wettlaufer: When would the regional conferences begin? Could you tell us, please?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The regional conferences will be one forum, and we are talking about getting those organized for May and June. We are in preparation and working right now with communities, especially in the north, by the way, which are not receiving as many services as they should. We'll start there first and we'll let the House know, as soon as we have formed the final resolution, as to where and when.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Yesterday, my colleague the member for Oakwood, Mike Colle, and

I, with Terry Burton of the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, met with tenants who are very confused and concerned about conflicting reports made by the Minister of Housing.

In the *Toronto Star* dated April 17, senior Ministry of Housing staff said that rental caps are under study and that the current system of rent control is under study but tenants shouldn't be worried. On the other hand, a very different Al Leach made comments on this to his friends at the Ontario Home Builders' Association in October 1995. I will quote what the minister said:

"We're also hoping something else will promote activity in the residential rental market. I'm talking about getting rid of rent control.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again: Rent control has got to go. In fact, within 12 months you will see legislation and the beginning of the end of rent control....

"So we're going to put controls right back where they belong: in the marketplace."

Can the minister clarify which Al Leach tenants in the province should believe?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): As I've said repeatedly in this House, we have no intentions of doing anything with rent control until we're satisfied we have a system that provides better tenant protection than we have now. We're very close to achieving that. I expect to bring something forward in the not-too-distant future.

I'd like to say that I think everybody recognizes that the current rent control system does not work. I know my colleague agrees with that. He said in the estimates, when we were debating it, that the current system doesn't work and has to be revised. They said in the red book that the current system doesn't work and has to be revised. So we all agree that something has to be done with the rent control system, and we're going to do it.

Mr Curling: I want to correct the minister. I did not say rent control doesn't work, I said the present system can be improved, so don't start saying things to me about that. It was some months ago that the minister told the home builders' association that rent control would be gone, and I quoted what he said here. I understand you told tenants' advocates that your plan was to cut six of the acts, or all of the acts, that protect tenants and bring in sort of watered-down housing legislation that will strip 20 years of tenant protection. Your ministry's senior official stated that your policy would be considered and decided by cabinet by June for legislation this fall.

After keeping tenants in the dark for almost a year and making confusing statements which only spread fear and uncertainty among tenants, when will the minister come clean and announce his intention, and give his assurance of full consultation after he releases his proposal? When will you intend to release that proposal so proper consultation can take place?

Hon Mr Leach: We have been consulting both with the tenants' association and with the association that represents landlords. Both of them have had considerable input into the proposals that we're developing at the staff levels. The staff have had ongoing meetings. I committed to the tenants' association that I would hold a meeting with it; every time I held a meeting with the landlord we

would hold a meeting with the tenants. We've reviewed the proposals. They agree that the existing system doesn't work, as you agreed that the existing system has to be revised.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Leach: To improve it you've got to change it, my honourable friend, and that's what we propose to do. We're going to do it and we're going to do it soon. I can assure this House that all of the affected stakeholders have had a part in the development of the new proposal.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. He will remember that the member for Algoma and I met with him on February 27—two months ago—about funding to Community Living Algoma. They were looking at the possibility of having to shut down a group home for the most severely handicapped, an integrated day care centre, and drop some front-line services. It's been two months, Mr Minister. You made some commitments to us, to the association and to the parents. What have you done?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): The member knows full well when we left that meeting we were trying to have the particular association resolve some internal matters. That was part of the discussion, and I think he clearly should remember that. There is certainly a path that we had agreed on. I indicated to him that it was very important to make sure the group home was somehow preserved, and certainly the other facilities. We had a discussion, yes, and out of that discussion we were trying to have this particular organization resolve it in a way that they had suggested beforehand.

Mr Martin: That's fine for you to say two months later, Mr Minister. When we met with you, you said you would talk with the Minister of Health. You said you would look within your own ministry for some funding if it was available. We said to you we would work with the association and other people in the community to make sure the rationalization that was going on, the plan that was going on within that ministry, would continue. Even more important, Mr Minister, you said you would include the member for Algoma and myself in those discussions.

I have written to you twice since then; I have not had an answer. We have not been kept apprised. We're not in the loop. We have not been allowed to be helpful and to share with you our perspective on this thing. When are you going to meet with Mr Wildman and myself on this issue? It's really important to these parents and they're getting more and more concerned.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I think the member forgets that somehow in this mix someplace we had a strike and during the strike we had a lot of our people who were working for our ministry not there.

Mr Martin: Tell that to the parents of the kids who are concerned about—

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Come on, let's get a little realistic about your point of view, frankly. Listen, we had

agreed to try to get this organization to resolve this matter by itself. This particular member obviously has a selective memory. But yes, I will say something. I do believe we should be working for a solution here; I don't deny that, and I think that's something we should do. I'll certainly look into it for the member, because despite the way the member is phrasing his question, I really do believe somehow that he has a legitimate concern here. Certainly I will look into it and get back to both the member and the leader of the third party. I will agree to do that, certainly, and as expeditiously as possible.

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BENEFITS FOR OLDER WORKERS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Madam Minister, over a year and a half ago, you, I and many other members on the other side stood and questioned the then Minister of Labour from Hamilton about POWA, the program for older worker adjustment. At that time, you, I and many other members were upset that things weren't being done for our older workers. That was over a year and a half ago. We have formed the government since June 8. I would like to know what you have done for our older workers up till now.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): To the member for Grey-Owen Sound, I would agree with you: I did stand in this House along with you and inquire of the NDP as to what was happening regarding POWA. I had the opportunity to discover, when I became Minister of Labour, that we had inherited a backlog of approximately 240 layoffs. Those layoffs had primarily occurred in the early 1990s. So what has happened today is that we have decided to allocate the appropriate amount of money, because the reason for the backlog is that the NDP publicly spoke in favour of POWA but did not provide the necessary dollars to match the federal contribution. At a time when they could have accessed approximately 50% of the federal allocation, they only accessed 32.8%.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You are lying.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. I think the member for Beaches-Woodbine would withdraw what she said.

Ms Lankin: Even though I meant it, I'll withdraw it.

Hon Mrs Witmer: In response to the question from the member for Grey-Owen Sound, I would indicate to you that each year there is almost 50% of the POWA funding available to the province of Ontario. We have only accessed 32.8% of that funding. We did not make the matching allocation. As you know, it's split 70% federal and 30% provincial.

However, in our first year of office, we increased the \$2.5-million provincial allocation by \$2 million, and so we have doubled what was spent by the NDP in its last year.

Mr Murdoch: That explains what we've done up till now. I have some workers in my area, and I'm sure there are many other workers, who have waited over five years to tap into this program. Will we be continuing to fund this program? Will these people who were waiting for

five years be protected? Will they get something? I know you have to work with the federal government on this, I realize that, but I also have members who have waited over five years for something to happen. Will you commit today in the House that we will look after these people and get something done?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I can assure the member that my staff is working with the federal staff in order to ensure that those workers will indeed receive their compensation in a very timely manner. We are working hard to ensure that does take place.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Minister, in your business plan that was released last week and in announcements you made to this House last year, you indicated that you would be closing the laboratory services that are provided through the occupational health and safety branch of your ministry. One of those labs is the radiation protection laboratory. I should tell you, Minister, that that laboratory provides all radiological measurements associated with Ontario's nuclear emergency plan and all measurements in support of the province's contingency plan with respect to any potential emergencies at Pickering, Darlington, Bruce, Chalk River and indeed offshore plants such as Fermi II, which is adjacent to Windsor.

Minister, what plans does your government have to replace this important laboratory service, and when will you have a full announcement with respect to it?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I can assure you that we share your concern for the safety of workers. Obviously, if there is to be any change in the situation, we will do it in such a way that safety continues to be our prime concern.

Mr Duncan: The minister obviously doesn't even understand the question. This goes well beyond working people, whom you've left less well protected; this refers to communities. Just this week your laboratory is testing drinking water in Pickering to make sure that community will be safe from any potential nuclear waste that could get into the drinking supply.

You ought to know what's going on in your ministry and you ought to be able to stand in your place today and assure communities right across this province what service you'll provide by the government, not through some private American source. Other jurisdictions have maintained these services. What are you going to do to ensure that the only agency in the government of Ontario that measures nuclear contamination in the event of emergencies is replaced or left in place?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would suggest to the member opposite that he should stop the fearmongering. He should understand that we are committed to the safety of the people in this province and we will ensure that the standards and safety measures are taken.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): In the absence of the Minister of Environment and Energy, my question is

for the Chair of Management Board. Minister, the cuts that your government has made to the environment are having devastating impacts on our environment. You have eliminated blue box funding; you've cancelled funding to the green communities program that was designed to encourage water and energy conservation while creating thousands of jobs; you've cancelled funding to the Clean Up Rural Beaches program, which helped eliminate agricultural runoff from entering our waterways; you've killed funding for the province's household hazardous waste program, and the list goes on and on.

The public is not going to be fooled. They know that your government is not concerned about the environment. I would like to ask you today, what programs are you putting in place to conserve energy and water use, to protect rural beaches and to collect hazardous household waste?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): A good deal of the collection of household hazardous waste, for example, is accomplished through the municipal level. This government is working very closely with the various municipalities in terms of funding formulas: the block grant, for example, that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has introduced; the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to work with municipalities in terms of disentanglement, in terms of funding initiatives.

I can say from my perspective that municipalities are moving quite expeditiously in terms of collection of household hazardous waste, in terms of blue box collection etc. These programs are alive and healthy. In an international context, the kinds of programs we have for recycling and waste reduction in the province of Ontario are second to none.

Ms Churley: Ontario's programs used to be second to none. The minister missed the point of my question. This government is setting back environmental protection that has been put in place by successive governments over 20 years. We are not going to be second to none any more.

The reality about hazardous waste pickup is that the funding is gone. Municipalities have been cut by almost 50%. They're not going to have the money. They're dependent on funding from the province.

1500

A direct result of this government's cuts is that you have systematically eliminated the province's hazardous waste reduction strategy. You've put nothing in its place either. You've eliminated the Ontario Waste Management Corp, which was redefined for hazardous waste reduction. You've weakened regulations under the MISA program that reduced the discharge of toxic chemicals to our sewers. You have significantly reduced funding for new water and sewer facilities. You're dismantling the Environmental Protection Act and the Planning Act. A third of the MOEE has been eliminated. Compliance and enforcement is being cut by 25%.

Minister, this weekend we celebrate Earth Day. You can see—and I could go on and on with this list. You are dismantling environmental protection. Minister, who is going to be protecting the Ontario environment, now that your government isn't?

Hon David Johnson: I differ with the premise and the assumption made by the member opposite. In the province of Ontario we have an excellent level of environmental protection; we will continue to have an excellent level of environmental protection.

But will the province of Ontario be able to spend the same amount of money in the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Housing, my ministry and any ministry? No. Can we continue to run \$10-billion deficits year after year after year, as the previous government did? No, we cannot. So across the board there needs to be a reining in of the expenditures of the province of Ontario, and clearly we're doing that.

The Minister of Environment and Energy has focused on her core businesses. The ministry will be continuing to set the policies, to set the standards, to set the objectives and the ministry will continue to enforce those policies, standards and objectives to ensure that there is a high level of protection of the environment in the province of Ontario.

Having said that, the Ministry of Environment and Energy will call on the private sector, will call on the people of Ontario, will call on municipalities to also be involved in delivering the services to protect the environment, and I can assure you we will have a high level of service for the environmental services in the province of Ontario.

VARITY CORP

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): I'm very happy to have an opportunity to ask a question today. Noticing a week or so ago when the Premier commented about the free flow of question period, questions that flow out of previous questions, I listened very intently to the member for Beaches-Woodbine—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Who's the question to?

Mr Stockwell: The question's to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism—when she talked very interestingly about General Motors and their interest in divesting themselves of some of their facilities.

It kind of struck me as passing strange. I want to ask the minister, I wonder what prompted that questioning when, not more than four or five years ago the newly elected, newly minted socialists at Queen's Park were in their places and had a very firm and honourable position apparently when it came to companies and government grants and government loans. Yet this is the same crowd—and I remember the member sitting as a minister, I say to you, Mr Minister—who talked about Varsity and the \$50 million that they left the province with. The position that the NDP at the time had was: "We are going to be tough on those kinds of loans. We're going to be sure they're repaid." When Varsity in fact started their process to leave the country, they were so tough, they held the door open for them as they left.

I ask you, Mr Minister, do you see the same contradiction in this government's position when on this side of the House and their newly minted position as third party—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): Based on that information, it does appear to me that the member opposite has a double set of standards.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask unanimous consent of the House, if the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Technology wishes to do so—I'm just asking for unanimous consent of the House; they may want to or not want to—whether he has a statement on the closing of the Mott's plant in St Catharines. Cadbury Beverages has announced the closing of Mott's in St Catharines. With 175 jobs being lost in St Catharines, I'm wondering if the minister has a statement that he might wish to make. If he does, I'd like to ask unanimous consent—

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No.

PETITIONS

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and, operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals;

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas the principles of discipline, self-help and a regimented environment at Transition House have combined with counselling and support to provide youth with the motivation and self-respect to return to school or to find jobs; and

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on the statistics of children and youth in crisis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and places the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding for Transition House in Chatham."

This petition is signed by 330 persons from Chatham and Kent county, and I affix my signature to it.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I received a letter from a Mr Stan Papst, who asked that I present this petition today from some 4,786 signatures, requesting an end to the spring bear hunt in Ontario. He asked me to read this into the record, and I will do so.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas it is estimated that 7,000 to 8,000 bears a year are killed in Ontario during the spring and fall bear hunt; and

"Whereas the Federation of Ontario Naturalists estimate that approximately one third of the bears killed are female and that only 30% of the orphaned cubs survive; and

"Whereas bears are being poached year-round for their gall bladders and paws for the Asian market; and

"Whereas the estimated take of the bear population does not include the impacts from poaching; and

"Whereas bears, wherever they are found in other states, have shown themselves to be susceptible to endangerment from hunting and poaching;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to ban the spring bear hunt in the province of Ontario."

PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations which will run them for profit; and

"Whereas corporate takeover will be strictly user-pay for services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and worker safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars, even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating its privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the selloff of Ontario public services and reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects of Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, less teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas the Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas the Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my name to this petition.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Petitions? The member for Scarborough Centre.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry, the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

TAX REDUCTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. "Whereas the government of Ontario is planning to implement tax cuts"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Please, just wait. I had somebody right in front of me and I couldn't see the member for Beaches-Woodbine. In fairness, I think the member for Beaches-Woodbine should read her petition.

Ms Lankin: "Whereas the government of Ontario is planning to implement tax cuts that will benefit well-off people while at the same time they have cut incomes to the poor; and

"Whereas 46% of Ontario families make less than \$35,000 per year but will get only 7.3% of the benefits of the proposed tax cuts, or about \$462 per year; and

"Whereas families with total incomes of over \$95,000 a year make up only 9.2% of all Ontario families, but they will get 32.7% of the benefits; and

"Whereas in these tough times it is unconscionable that the poor will go hungry while the wealthy are given more.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I have affixed my signature to the same.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition signed by a number of residents from Ontario, the cities of Toronto, Markham and Thunder Bay. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed as quickly as possible with legislation to reduce our provincial tax rates, as promised during the last provincial election, and we call on all members of the Parliament of Ontario to support the government in its promise to reduce provincial income tax rates in Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition signed by a number of residents from Chatham, Wallaceburg, Dover Centre, Thamesville and Tilbury, and Dresden as well.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth, as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and, operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals; and

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on the statistics of children and youth in crisis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and placed the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

I affix my signature to it.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Support from Hamilton to save St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton continues to grow, as evidenced by more petitions to the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I support the petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): This is a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I've affixed my signature to the same.

ALZHEIMER RESPITE CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by a number of people from the Niagara Peninsula. It reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Niagara region has one of the highest per capita populations of seniors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Niagara region ranks 32nd out of 38 health regions in long-term-care funding and that more individuals wait for support services from the March of Dimes than those who actually are served by it; and

"Whereas Alzheimer patients who critically depend on support services in order to cope in a more humane way with this devastating illness continue to suffer from unacceptable delays in receiving respite care; and

"Whereas more than half of all Ontario families waiting for Alzheimer-related respite care reside in the Niagara area;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to adopt the plan by the Niagara Regional District Health Council which would help improve the way vulnerable people are treated in the Niagara area."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I am in agreement with its contents.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is planning to implement tax cuts that will benefit well-off people while at the same time they have cut incomes to the poor; and

"Whereas 46% of Ontario families make less than \$35,000 a year but will get only 7.3% of the benefits of the proposed tax cuts (or about \$462 a year); and

"Whereas families with total incomes over \$95,000 a year make up only 9.2% of all Ontario families but they will get 32.7% of the benefits, in these tough times it is unconscionable that the poor will go hungry and the wealthy are given more.

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I affix my signature also.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects of Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cost-cutting outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding of junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I have a petition to the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council, and of course the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of this efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, request the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council to ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

1520

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr Arnott from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly presented the committee's report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 22, An Act to provide for an Oath of Allegiance for Members of the Legislative Assembly / Projet de loi 22, Loi prévoyant le serment d'allégeance pour les députés à l'Assemblée législative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

I will ask the question again. Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 22 be ordered for third reading?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Committee of the whole House.

The Acting Speaker: Committee of the whole.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOWN OF MILTON ACT, 1996

Mr Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr50, An Act respecting the Town of Milton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Chudleigh moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr50, An Act respecting the Town of Milton.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO ROAD SUPERINTENDENTS ACT, 1996

Mr Arnott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr53, An Act respecting the Association of Ontario Road Superintendents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Arnott moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr53, An Act respecting the Association of Ontario Road Superintendents.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ASSOCIATION OF REGISTERED GRAPHIC DESIGNERS OF ONTARIO ACT, 1996

Mrs Marland moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr56, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mrs Marland moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr56, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

Mr Sampson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Election Act / Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Sampson, do you have any comments?

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): Mr Speaker, may I defer to the member for Brampton South?

The Acting Speaker: You've just moved second reading of a bill. Make any comments you want to make, and after that I'll just go in rotation. Any further debate? Now you can go ahead.

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It took me a while to get up here and participate in this very important and timely piece of legislation, if I might say so.

I wish to outline for the benefit of my colleagues both on this side of the House and opposite what, in our view, the essence of this bill is and subsequently beg leave for their approval in an expeditious way, given that there is something rather timely about Bill 44.

The bill's instant importance relates to the by-election in the electoral district of York South. It proposes certain amendments to the Elections Act which would, we feel, (1) cost the taxpayers less money, and (2) allow for a proper system of enumeration to take place with those cost efficiencies in mind.

The amendments that are proposed in this bill would allow the chief elections officer to utilize last year's—that is, the voters' list that was used for the June 8 election—for the York South by-election. This does a couple of things:

(1) By our calculation as well as by the chief elections officer's, it would save a net total of about \$55,000. The total cost of enumeration in the riding of York South would be about \$70,000. There would be a cost, though, associated with any revision costs of approximately \$25,000. We feel that probably in the neighbourhood of \$55,000 to \$60,000 would be saved through this process.

We wanted to assure the electors in York South that there are a couple of other changes that would allow revision of the voters' list in a way that is both expeditious for the chief elections officer and I think fair to the voters of York South.

In the first place, and this is part of the cost-effective nature of this bill, we remove the need for door-to-door enumeration or a special enumeration canvass in the electoral district in the event—this is a general rule now as proposed in this bill—that a by-election or an electoral event, to use the technical term, is held within one year of any general election.

(2) It would be, according to this legislation, allowable for the chief elections officer to ensure additional revision locations that will be used to accommodate the electors who have moved into the riding for the first time.

In addition to that for the first time, this bill recognizes that for those who are living in urban polling locations—I believe all of York South will be classified as an urban setting—there will be an opportunity to allow additions up to and including election day. Members of the House know that in rural locations this has been the case, but now we propose to add this in terms of an urban location.

This would allow an opportunity for electors in the riding of York South in the instant case, and on a general basis all other by-election ridings, the ability to register up to and including election day. I think that would be

the fair thing to do if we are not doing a new enumeration in the riding.

There are a couple of other things that I wish to draw to the attention of the House. Additional information would be available by the chief elections officer to those who are no longer eligible, and I think on a wider level we can assume that if this system in place now allows for a more expeditious type of enumeration. Maybe there are some lessons that can be learned that would help this House devise further changes to the Elections Act which would allow both an opportunity for electors to have their say and for this to take place, given our financial constraints as a government and as an assembly, in a way that will ensure we are responsible to the taxpayers.

For those reasons, I urge adoption of this bill.

1530

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): First of all, it would help if we had a copy of the bill. My understanding is it's somewhere, but there's nothing available in the House, because it seems the member opposite has the details of this bill; we do not.

We endorse the principles of the bill, and I hope that later on today we could get a copy of the bill so we can speak to it in more detail to people who are interested.

The people of York South are extremely anxious to partake in this by-election, and I think—by the way, Mr Speaker, I have a couple of pages of notes here on it, just handed to me. The people of York South, as I said, are very interested in one change in particular.

As you know, in the last election and many previous elections provincially, there's been a real contradiction in terms of the way you can be added to the voters' list in a provincial election, as opposed to federal or municipal. I know a lot of people sounded most frustrated when they showed up to vote on election day and they were turned away. They were under the assumption the same rules applied federally as they did provincially but, as you know, they didn't.

I know countless numbers, maybe in other members' ridings, had the same experience where they showed up and they were turned away because they couldn't partake on voting day. They couldn't be added to the list. I think that part of the bill, that addition, is very important, considering there isn't going to be the extra enumeration that will take place. I think notice has to be given out to people in York South, hopefully through the candidates and through the elections office, to let them know they can do that.

I would think the critical thing is to give them information in terms of what they need to present to the election officials, the returning officers, that day so they can get on the list, whether it be a birth certificate or a hydro bill or a driver's licence or something. I think those instructions are very, very critical so people will know they can still vote as long as they carry certain documents and what the documents are.

In some cases, as you know, there are a lot of seniors in York South, and perhaps they don't have a driver's licence so alternatives to drivers' licences should be mentioned specifically so people will come with the proper documentation and be included and allowed to vote.

I think that is something that had to be rectified and this bill does that. I think it is a prudent and practical way of approaching the by-election and enumeration process, and that is the highlight of the bill that I think is certainly going to allow as many people as possible to vote in York South. I think the date is May 23, if I'm not mistaken.

Again, we support and endorse this approach, especially with that addition, and hopefully the elections office, the election commission, will disseminate information to the citizens of York South about the changes and the new process in terms of being allowed to vote on election day if you bring the proper documentation. We endorse that and support this bill.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Very briefly, we also will be supporting the legislation. I have a little bit of concern about the process we have followed on this, and that this issue has been around for a while.

The government's been elected for several months. The by-election writs were dropped and then Mr Bailie decides to come forward with a proposal for a change in legislation that now means the legislation has to be rushed through, and we don't have an opportunity to discuss all of the pros and cons of moving in this particular direction, because while it seems like it's a process and a change that is absolutely and totally supportable, there are some possible drawbacks in terms of concerns about possible fraud and concerns about people being left off a voters' list, especially in a riding like York South where the turnover is very, very substantial in any given period of time and there will be a huge change in the voters' list even though it's only 12 months from the time the last election was called; in fact, I think it's a year next Friday.

I agree with the principle of it, and it's obviously important in that it will save the taxpayers money in this by-election. I'm not an expert by any stretch in this particular field, but I believe this is in line with what they do federally. I think we did this when the referendum was held on the Meech Lake accord, or Charlottetown. We didn't have to do an entirely new voters' list; we used the voters' list that was there. It's been tried; it can work.

There have got to be a lot of safeguards put in place, and the member for Oakwood has referred to some of those that are in here. We'll see how it works in this particular by-election. But again, I think it's important, when we're changing the way we carry out our elections in this province, that it be done in a much more thoughtful way than just moving this quickly after writs are dropped and then a bill—I mean, we're at the point where this bill has to be passed in the next couple of days. We're debating it for second reading today and the bill hasn't even been printed. We've got the copies that were tabled and given to us when the bill was introduced, as is required by these orders. I assume we're breaking the rules of the Legislature in order to proceed quickly with this.

This is not something Mr Bailie would not have known was going to happen, whether it was York South or whatever. He was before the Board of Internal Economy a few weeks ago looking at his budget and said to us that normally after a general election there are at least three

by-elections in the first two years. This is normal; this happens.

I think it would have been more useful to take a look at reforms in a more thoughtful way, where we actually had the opportunity—my recollection about changes in election laws is that they're not just brought forward by Mr Bailie to the Legislature. They're actually brought forward and then they go to representatives of the three political parties who are not necessarily members of the assembly, and officials from the parties sit down and take a look at the amendments, discuss them and decide whether they're appropriate and whether they will strengthen the democratic process in the province. I have some concerns about the process. That's not to take away from the principle, which I think is supportable.

I'll finish by saying that I think there's lots of talk, and has been over the years, about things like permanent voters' lists. I look at the process that they use about a mile and a half from where I live, on the other side of the border, where you get to the point where in the States usually only about 50% to 60% of the eligible voters ever even make it on to the voters' list. Huge numbers of people are missed because they have to register and there's not the kind of process we have. Ours might be in some ways more expensive, but it's a process that I think by and large guarantees virtually everyone the opportunity to get on the voters' list. It's a solid voters' list that allows the democratic process to work and work well.

When there are changes, we should always be careful because I think the process we have in Ontario and in Canada, while it's expensive, does work to strengthen democracy. Sometimes a little bit of money to make sure the democratic process works is worth the expenditure because it's the fundamental basis under which this entire process works.

We'll be supporting the legislation, with those concerns, and we'll be supporting it in a quick way.

1540

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Any further debate?

Mr Sampson has moved second reading of Bill 44, An Act to amend the Election Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

COMMITTEE REPORT

REPORT, STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for adoption of the recommendations contained in the report of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly on security in the legislative precincts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I believe that Mr Arnott was the person who had the floor. Any further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure today to rise and make my comments known with regard to the report on security in the precinct of the Legislature. The Legislative Assembly committee did attend to this

issue and looked at the resources available to it from both Quebec City and Ottawa and other constituent areas to ensure that there were suitable levels of security within the precinct of the Legislature.

I'm satisfied that this all-party committee fairly reviewed the recommendations contained within the report and had full discussions with indeed the Speaker and the Clerk of the Legislature. I submit that this has been given full review by each caucus. It was my understanding at the stage when this report was voted on in the committee that all members of the committee at that time were in support of the committee's recommendations.

I'm interested in the other parties' points of view and would respond.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I'll be very brief on this report. First of all, I want to compliment the Chair of the committee, the member for Wellington, who I think attempted on a relatively difficult issue—I don't mean in terms of a lot of public interest in this particular process, but differences of opinion within the committee—to bring about a consensus on where we should move in terms of some increased security, but some practical changes that I think will serve all the interests of the public as well as the interests of the staff of the assembly, staff of the caucuses and members of the assembly.

I must say I went into this process not at all open to the concept of things like signing in and having nametags once you've come in or having to phone up to MPPs' offices. But the argument was put forward, and there were other compromises on the other side that were put forward, and I've come to the conclusion that in 1996—I don't know what we call it in here, registration, but limited: having access for the public to come in so that people know who's in the building so there's some additional security.

The most compelling argument that was made to me was a couple of the staff who came forward and said that even though they hadn't experienced an incident, they still felt less secure in the assembly today than they might have 10 years ago and, as a result of that, there was a need to at least have some additional security that would allow them to carry out their functions in the assembly in a more secure and comfortable way. We're not adding that much new security, just some controls so people know who is in the assembly and that there's some access to the assembly.

I think one of the very positive things is that we moved away from having the permanent barriers out front, which we in this caucus felt was a very negative move several months ago and actually encouraged difficulties at the assembly, that when you can have speakers on the front steps of the assembly and have the public address system available to the demonstrators, and the organizers are on the front steps, that in itself is an additional level of security. But also just the optics of having permanent barriers out in front of the assembly I think says to the public that their Parliament is not open to the public, and that was a very wrong and bad message to be communicating to the public when that decision was made.

There are some major recommendations in here on how to organize the security force. I agree with those recommendations. It was a strong position by the Speaker. So I want to say on behalf of our caucus that we support this report and we will be voting in favour of it. I also want to say that I congratulate the Speaker for bringing forth some of his ideas and making sure this referral took place to the assembly. The support and advice that were provided by the security force and the police, but in particular the staff here and the Clerk of the assembly, who spoke to us on a number of occasions in camera with his advice and the Speaker's advice, I think helped very much lead to the consensus that the committee has reported.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a different view of security than some of my colleagues have in the Legislature, because I happen to believe that this Legislative Assembly should be as open to the public as possible. I recognize that there are some problems with that. One thing I want to say is that when I came to this Legislature in June 1977, people could virtually walk in off the street at any time and have access to this building. They could walk into the public gallery, sit down and observe what was happening. As long as they maintained their silence in the gallery itself—and you're not allowed to take notes, apparently, except in the press gallery—things were fine. People liked that access. I remember that when I was a student I used to from time to time come and sit in the gallery up there and watch the proceedings of the House and the eloquent speakers that were in the Legislative Assembly in those days.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): That was a long time ago.

Mr Bradley: A long time ago indeed, as some of my colleagues will say.

I then become very concerned when I see the kind of security that reminds me of Ottawa. When you go to Ottawa—and I understand; they had a bomb go off in a washroom there, and that certainly scared a lot of people. The experience in the National Assembly of Quebec scared a lot of people, quite obviously for very good reason, when there were people killed and some people I believe injured when a person shot up the inside of the assembly in that particular case.

So I understand that and I know that in these days it's important to protect the Premier of the province, whoever that happens to be, and the senior cabinet ministers, who tend to be more the targets of people who are dissatisfied than those in the opposition or those who are in the back benches on either side of the House or the front benches on this side of the House. We tend not to have the power, so nobody tends to be too confrontational with us.

But one thing I don't like: If this report contains signing in, I don't like that. I don't think it's anybody's business who is going to anybody's office. You go to Ottawa and you have to sign in, they're putting badges on you, and they call up to say so-and-so is coming up. It's unfortunate. Perhaps the members of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly who dealt with the report said, "Well, that's 1996, unfortunately, and that's the way it has to be."

But I really think there was a lot of virtue to this place when Premier Davis was the Premier of the day. The opposition leaders at that time were Stuart Smith and for the NDP it would have been Stephen Lewis. The three of them would have talked about matters of security in those days, as would the House leaders.

1550

I just think we're becoming overly secure. I'm not critical of the people who are proposing that because it's certainly well meaning in terms of the proposing of that. I don't think a lot of people like it either, even those who are proposing it. But there is a virtue to the freedom to come into a building that the public as a whole owns and to observe what is going on without being hassled by people in the hallway as to who you are and what you're doing there.

It's important to have special security on the Premier of the province. I know within this building there is special security, and when the Premier's going anywhere, he has with him people who are, for want of a better word, bodyguards—we call them security. It's important the Premier have that because no one wants the Premier to be in any physical danger at any time. We have disagreements in this House, some very strong disagreements verbally in this House, but we want to ensure that our Premier, whoever that is, is secure from the kind of unfortunate attacks that have taken place in other jurisdictions. I certainly understand that and I'm not critical of that.

But everywhere you look now there's a surveillance camera. You walk down the hallway and there's a surveillance camera on you. You're out in the parking lot and there's a surveillance camera. I get a little bit annoyed with that kind of thing. Maybe that's the reality of 1996. Some of my friends who have served on the committee would say, "We accept this report because that is the reality," but this constant surveillance, the constant hassling of people, is not pleasant.

With regard to the front, I think in some cases—not all the time—when we have demonstrations there are going to be people who show up who are there to make trouble. I suppose if you looked at any of the film or tape of that over the years, you would see that there were certain people who were around here when there was great trouble to be caused outside, but the majority of people aren't that way. They come here to demonstrate.

Essentially what used to happen was that they would show up at the front and the opposition people would go out and say: "Of course you're right. The government is terrible and we're on your side." Then the government spokesperson would come out and everyone would boo and say, "Isn't it awful?" But at least the minister came out to speak to them and then they went away satisfied. They could go back home and say, "I booed"—the minister of whatever—"the Chairman of Management Board this afternoon, and I showed him what I really thought of him." There was a little bit of venting of anger without any physical confrontation with the minister or anyone else, which we would not want to see.

Sometimes the security barriers tend to get people to want to charge them or remove them, so that's a difficult issue. On the other hand, we had an unfortunate incident

with some members of a student delegation who were here. There was a demonstration and a large number of people here, and a few of them, a minority of that group, confronted the security here and did some damage at the front. They should be liable for that damage, should pay for that damage. It's a building that belongs to all the people of this province and I don't think there's an excuse for that kind of violence.

Nevertheless, I think it's important to note that when these demonstrations take place, or any activity around here, by and large the people of Ontario, even those protesting, are pretty sedate people.

There's an interesting story that relates to security and the recent strike that took place in Ontario. An individual who was from another province and held a cabinet portfolio in another province came up to a building—he didn't know the strike was on—and saw a picket line, people carrying picket signs with their slogans and so on. He went up to a door, tried the door and could not get into the building. He was walking away in a disappointed fashion when one of the people carrying a picket sign, a woman, came over to him and said, "Well, sir, if you actually go over and press this buzzer, someone will come to the door and let you in."

This was not what you'd call a very militant action in that particular case. I realize there are different cases, but as a demonstration, I think most people are pretty fairminded, most people are pretty sedate and reserved, even within a demonstration, but there are going to be people who cause problems and must be dealt with in a way they don't like but that sometimes is going to be necessary.

I know it deals here with the controlled access to the Legislative Building, and again, people in the upper gallery have to go through a metal detector. They have an interesting situation in the United States Congress. When I was a minister, I had to meet with several Senators and members of the House of Representatives to try to persuade them to do the right thing on acid rain, which was the issue at that time. When you walked into their building, the only thing you had to do, essentially, was go through a metal detector. I can't recall anyone demanding where we were going, as a delegation, or what we were doing there. It was simply going through a metal detector. The only reason we would have asked was we would not know exactly where the office might have been.

While they are security-conscious and they have had their problems as well, there wasn't that you-must-identify-yourself circumstance. I'm a bit uneasy if someone comes to the door and they have to be identified, because there's always a log there. I know we do our best to ensure privacy and security of information, but if you don't believe that wouldn't appear on the front page of some publication at any particular time, then you're quite naïve as to who was visiting.

My friend the member for St Catharines-Brock is here. He might have a person who has some secret information about the government that the person wants to reveal. That person would have to sign in to bring this information, and then the member would not be able to retain the security of information that I know he would want to

have, if that person were bringing this secret information that may be helpful to the people of this province.

There are requirements for members' staff and visitor identification and in some cases I can see that's useful. For instance, if you're getting into the assembly chamber and the chairs behind the Speaker, or people are in the lobby behind either the opposition or the government, it's important that they have some kind of identification. I can recall when the NDP was in power, there was a woman—not that it meant any difference to the NDP, I'm just saying a period of time. When the NDP was in power, someone had come through the back lobby and around and out on to the floor of the Legislature to confront the then Minister of Health. That was not a pleasant situation. The person was not violent in this case, but I can certainly understand the need for identification in that case.

A protocol for public demonstrations: I think one that is lenient enough that it allows people and actually encourages people to express their views without causing damage to the property or without being unduly disruptive, is quite acceptable. That's where if you provide these people with a microphone and perhaps a podium, that can be quite helpful in encouraging the demonstration to be peaceful, or sometimes a flatbed truck is what they like to have out there, that they want to have out there. If they have that, they can bring their guitars out and have a nice demonstration. You can enjoy the music if you want to. But I think when we try to put too many roadblocks in the way of the demonstration, it can become a problem.

Crowd control—listen, that's the hardest job there is. I recognize that. I was concerned when I saw what happened here on the day when there was a large demonstration associated with the strike. I know how difficult it is for security people, just watching them. I know how uneasy all of us felt when we saw at least the visual of a major confrontation between police forces and individuals on the picket line, and that's why the government has called an inquiry to find out just what happened and, most important in these matters, how we can improve upon that, how we can try to avoid that situation, what caused it and how we can overcome it in the future.

I think it's incumbent upon all of us, now that the inquiry has been appointed—and Bud Estey, Willard Estey, who is a former Supreme Court judge, is a very respected person in the judicial field, so I would be confident that he would be very fairminded and a good choice for that particular inquiry. I think we all hope it will be a relatively quick inquiry, a focused inquiry, and I think all of us have to be not biased in what we think he should come forward with. That's why we have an inquiry of this kind, and that's why I think it can provide some use to us in the assembly.

1600

So those are the areas. There are many details of this with which I become concerned. I happen to use the back door from time to time because it's close to the parking lot—some of the members who park out at the back would find that—for carrying items in and out of the building. I would hope that we're not into a situation, as members, where everybody has to truck around to the

front door or where it's a situation where it's virtually impossible to come in at unorthodox hours with the material that we have to take to our offices, because members don't work 9 to 5. Members probably work something like 6 to—it can be 3 o'clock in the morning if necessary.

I appreciate the role of the Speaker. I know it's a difficult role when you're trying to deal with security. As always, appropriate training—I think everybody's talked about appropriate training of those who are responsible for security—is an important component of any report. I know that while there are some items in this report with which I would find myself in disagreement, it was a pretty good consensus of the people who served on the committee that this represented in fact a consensus or a compromise of the views which were expressed.

When we're talking about matters related to the assembly, that's probably the way it should be, not one person or one party imposing a regimen on others, but a consensus being reached. That's why when I speak, let's say, not against, but when I question some of the provisions of this, I hope it's not taken as a criticism whereby I believe there should be a standing vote against this particular committee report.

A lot of people have put work into this. The members of the committee, the staff of the assembly, and the security people themselves have all put a lot of work into advising members on the best way of handling this.

I would conclude simply by saying that I lament the fact that we have to move as far as this assembly report, the Report on Security in the Legislative Precincts, dictates and suggests. But I'm always open-minded enough to concede that perhaps others who have studied this very carefully and looked at all the options are facing the reality, an unfortunate reality that it is, of 1996. I thank the members of the committee for giving due consideration to all the matters that were brought before it in developing a report for members of the assembly.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): My comments will be most—

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): Brief?

Mr Pouliot: Yes, brief, most broadly summarized.

The report strikes a balance between recognizing and living through the changing times, meeting the challenge, and yet the long-standing right of people to first assemble and demonstrate, sometimes in favour, more often than not to voice some legitimate discontent. Legitimate discontent has been long related to being among the—well, a mainspring of civilization, to say the least.

The barricades have been removed. There was a consensus; we felt in some cases that it could be an agent provocateur or at the least a sign that people were not always welcome. It meant: Beware.

I was on the steps of the assembly, Mr Speaker, and I say this to you with respect. I know of your role in your jurisdiction as a sort of commander. You will forgive me if I don't excel in exactitude, but you're the one who rules over these chambers. For some it might be anecdotal but not to you, I'm sure.

The barricades have been removed. You also have in front of the Legislature a new entrance, a new platform, new sidewalks with a granite-like style of steps, but you

have no access for the disabled. This is the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. You no longer have a ramp. The building is still accessible. People say the south entrance does not have accessibility, but the north entrance does. The front of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario is the south entrance. There used to be one. We're not talking about a great number of dollars. It can easily be incorporated in the design. It causes a threat to no one, but for people who come in vehicles, and most people who are unable to climb the steps do, the front is more accessible than the back, and it stands to reason. Yet you have to ask people to use the back.

I'm just asking, through your good office, for a few dollars more. Architects tell us it can easily be reconciled. We used to have them before but there are no plans, I'm told, to have them at the front at this time. Why don't we endeavour to see what the minimal cost would be—I'm convinced it's not more than that—to make sure that the front of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario at least has accessibility for the disabled?

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): I too support the recommendations of the committee. However, in my own personal opinion, they don't go far enough in terms of protecting and providing security for not only members of the elected assembly but for the staff contained within this building or for the citizens—the public, the tourists—who visit this historic building.

I don't say that lightly; I say that with some experience. Let me preface by saying that I served as a police officer for over eight years with the former Kitchener city police department. During my years on council there I served six years as the vice-chairman and commissioner and as chairman of the Waterloo Regional Police Services Board, so I think my comments add some credence to the topic at hand.

If you look at any institution within this community, if you look at the residence where we reside, there is a very strong emphasis on security within those buildings, not only for the tenants but for those who visit the tenants. We have security in this community and we have security in all our communities, whether it's an urban or a rural riding. If you look at the emphasis within our school system, within the municipalities, we have local crime prevention or crime safety councils within our community, within our schools; we have various task forces dealing with the element of crime in the community; we do safety audits within our communities for those who are less vulnerable; we do Take Back the Night programs in many communities.

There are major initiatives occurring across Canada and, more importantly, within the province of Ontario, within all our respective ridings. The basis of all the programs is safety and security, and that is the topic the honourable member Mr O'Toole has spoken to in this House. It's a very serious topic and should be treated with a great deal of respect and very seriously.

I personally don't feel that it goes far enough. Security measures can be very subtle and can provide a very strong element of safety. There are many methods, and I won't get into the methods; I don't think we should discuss the logistics of the security measures. Again, that in itself is part of the security program.

I think all members of this House should work cooperatively with the committee and with the recommendations. If they need modification, then so be it, but it's done in the interest of the safety of the members of this Legislature, the members of the public and the staff who come in here. It's probably one of the most important issues we'll deal with, one of the many we'll deal with in this House.

As you know, the demographics of society have changed and are changing. The fabric of this community, of the communities we represent are changing. There is a very subtle and very strong influence, an inference about safety in our communities. It is a fact, it is a way of life and we have to deal with it in a very responsible and responsive manner.

I think that is the attitude of Mr O'Toole, the member, and the attitude of the committee. We've had tremendous input from some very leading experts and from people who have had vast experience within this precinct. We should take heed and very seriously give strong consideration to this and also to any modifications that will enhance and improve the security in this Legislative Building.

1610

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I'll only be a few minutes, but I felt I would like to add some of my personal comments to this as well.

It saddens me whenever we have to discuss an issue like this, but I realize it's necessary and I compliment the committee for the work it's done. I guess it does depend on your perspective, your point of view, your experience. I come from a small, urban and rural riding. Quite frankly, because of our different experiences, I respect the member for Kitchener-Wilmot and his comments that this doesn't go far enough; I guess it's sufficient for me to say that I'm sad it even has to go this far.

I came to this place a little more than two years ago and I viewed it much the same as my colleague from St Catharines, as a public place. Rather than discussing how we can restrict access to this place, I think we should be discussing, albeit we'd be heading for the same centre ground, and I would prefer the discussion were in a positive way, how can we make it more accessible and yet retain the security of the Legislature?

That being as it may, I want to comment, as my colleague previously commented, that if there's one issue in this report I do not agree with, it's that you have to sign in and that you have to tell someone where you're going and who you're going to see. It should be sufficient that we can be assured that the person who comes in is not a danger to anyone in the building, but in these days of government knowing more than I'd like it to know about anybody's private business, I'm opposed to the fact that you have to sign in and say where you're going. I agree with my colleague that unless there's very strict control of those papers people have to sign, it may intimidate some people and I don't think we should be doing that.

Again from a personal perspective, and I'll conclude with this, the time I've been most disappointed in the last two years was on the day of March 18. There was, I assume, because this is updating our security procedure,

a plan in place at that time, and as a member I have to say that there was no information given to me as a member personally by the Speaker, who is in charge of security, as to how I should proceed that day. I was able to come into the building. I was able to gain access to the building, frankly without any, or at least very little, restriction. But my concern prior to the day, that morning, and I've thought about it since, is that not one bit of communication that I'm aware of—I put that caveat in just in case it didn't get to me—instructed me as a member as to what specific procedure I should take to get into this Legislature that day. I say that because that's my experience, and I hope the committee would take that into consideration in any finalization of the report, or the Speaker would take it into consideration, that you can have all of these measures in place but you also have to tell individual members and their staff how they should proceed under those specific circumstances.

In conclusion, I would say too, albeit it's a beautiful building—why my offices are in the Whitney Block. Granted, Speaker, we have fewer mice over there and no ghosts that I'm aware of, although I would like to see the ghost that they tell us roams these halls—

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: I do need the exercise, yes. Thank you. But as I read the report, I took it that there's a little less concern about the Whitney Block than there is about this building.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): It's only because you're there.

Mr Crozier: It's only because I'm there. If that's the case, and I'm not really concerned anyway, I hope the Whitney Block is included in that, because the Premier has one of his offices, I understand, on the fifth or sixth floor. I've never been invited up there, but I hope that the Whitney Block, if we have to go to these lengths, is considered in all this, and with respect, I have given these comments.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to add a few brief comments. As one of the members who have their names attached to this, there were a few things I did want to put on the record at the time that we approve it. Of course, the first is to be very clear that I am supportive of the report and all of the recommendations and intend to vote for this. I understand we're having a voice vote shortly, and I will be with the crowd that votes yea.

Having said that, one of the things I want to comment on is that I had a great deal of trepidation going into this process, having heard—and I'm not going to name members, because that's not the intent of these comments—but having listened to some members of the government make various comments here and there and with the reputation this crowd has on the issue of law and order and from our point of view that that reputation is one of being beyond the pale and beyond the necessary into the sort of Preston Manning, Reform Party, hard-line, simplistic viewpoint of how we deal with issues such as security and punishment and justice and crime and that whole range of issues, I was very concerned about getting into a process that in any way might at the end of the day

have myself, my caucus and I think others who feel similar ways in the Liberal Party agreeing or in some way being co-opted into agreeing to things that quite frankly we just shouldn't or otherwise wouldn't, and one doesn't rush into these sorts of things.

However, first of all because of the staffing needs of our caucus in terms of making sure people are there, plus, I suspect to some degree, my experience as the previous Solicitor General, there were fairly good reasons why I might be one of the members from our caucus. I want to say also that in our initial discussions, in our initial review of security measures, some of my original fears were being borne out, and after listening to some of the thoughts off the tops of the heads of some of my colleagues in the government back benches, I began to think that perhaps I had made a dreadful mistake and that indeed what I needed was an exit strategy out of this thing, because it was clearly going in the dumper and I didn't want any part of where it looked like it was going to go.

1620

Having said all of that, I think all of us on the committee, from all three parties, learned a lot about the issue of security in parliaments. There was a real desire on all our parts to try to find a series of recommendations we could support. There was a lot of goodwill on the part of all members to deal in an honest and open way and to be as non-partisan as possible—and we know that's not easy in this place—to pull together a report that reflects the give and take of people with different viewpoints trying to find common ground.

I think we found that. Certainly all of us were deeply moved by what we saw at the Quebec National Assembly, particularly when we traced the route of the individual who burst into that Parliament with a series of automatic weapons and began firing away indiscriminately, not only injuring but killing people.

I was personally very moved by standing at the spot where this individual came around a corner and was firing a semi-automatic rifle, and right on the other side of that corner was a group of school children who were taking a tour that day. It's only by the grace of God and the presence of mind of the teacher who was with them that they hit the ground and, for some unknown reason, perhaps the fate of God Himself or Herself, the shots went all around those kids and did not touch any of them. Being the parent of a four-year-old daughter, it moved me.

I realize, of course, that we can't prevent all things that may happen in a public building or prepare adequately for all types of indiscriminate violence that we may have in society. But we do have a responsibility to take reasonable steps to provide reasonable protection for not just the members but the staff who work here and the visitors who come here and our pages and everyone else who either has someone who works here or knows someone who visits here regularly. They expect there to be a certain level of commonsense security—I refuse to stop using the term; no matter how much you've badly destroyed it, I just refuse to. People have that right to expect us to take those measures, and I think this report reflects that.

I take seriously the comments of some members who feel that even this document goes too far, and this is one

of those issues where they could be right. I don't think there's any right or wrong one 'can definitively point to when we're dealing with issues like this. As my colleague the member for Essex South said in his comments, a lot of it has to do with the experience you bring here, your own personal viewpoint on these issues, your own philosophy and, to some degree, the politics of the issue, as is always the case with everything.

But I think we've put together a series of recommendations that make sense, which I am prepared to defend in the face of those who say, "You didn't go far enough." We've heard that today. I am prepared to say we have taken reasonable measures here. There may need to be changes down the road, loosening or tightening. Who knows? But for now, I am comfortable defending that, and for those who say we should do nothing and it should remain the way it is, I am equally comfortable saying no.

I find it rather ridiculous that staff people who work here who don't have their badge are being turned away at the door, while unknown individuals who don't work here just walk through and are allowed to come and go as they please. That doesn't make any sense. Either everybody has to have some element of being recorded as at least being here, some semblance of knowing who's here and what the activities are—protecting the rights citizens have and that people who visit us have—or open it wide open and change nothing, or give everybody some kind of recognition. But the idea that staff who are known would be stopped at the door because they don't have their badge and are sent back while others are allowed to come in, to me is idiotic. Therefore, we needed to make some decisions.

Having visited the House of Commons and having had very good discussions, I think those of us who participated in visiting those two parliaments would want to thank those individuals for being so honest and up front. There was not a security question we had that they weren't prepared to answer fully and completely, including the downside to some of the things they were doing or future concerns they had. If ever there was an incidence of nation-building, certainly that small experience is one I would point to where those three parliaments were working together for the common good of citizens that have a right to have access to these Parliament Buildings.

A couple more comments and then I'll take my place. I'm very pleased we've removed those bloody barriers from the front of the building that were dropped in there and anchored there. I think if you talk to average Ontarians, nothing bothers people more than the idea that there are these permanent barriers that made this place look like an armed camp, and unfortunately, given the agenda of this government, there are going to be more and larger and louder protests as we move along.

We haven't said that the barriers won't be there at all, but we have said that the sight of permanent barriers does not reflect what Ontarians see when they see their Legislative Building. I, for one, think that was one of the best things to come out of this, and I think the rest of the measures that we're taking—I also regret the fact that we have to do anything, but I do think these are reasonable measures.

I want to end on a positive note by again complimenting and thanking my parliamentary colleagues from all parties who very quickly recognized that it was in our best interests as elected members, full stop, not adding the party label, to try to find common ground so that something as significant and fundamental as the security of this building has the support of all three parties. The Speaker knows he has the support of all three parties, and I think that will make it much easier for us to continue. The idea that there'll be an ongoing committee is a good thing, where there won't be things like the barriers dropped in cement without an opportunity for us to have comment and give that to the Speaker of the day.

The conclusion of the report is one long but important sentence, and I want to enter it as part of my comments. It reads simply:

"The committee is hopeful that these recommendations will offer a balance between the need to ensure that the precincts remain open and accessible to individuals who wish to participate in parliamentary democracy and the need to maintain the safety and security of the Legislative Building, its users and visitors, and the institution it represents."

As one of the members who brought this into the House from that committee, I think we have achieved that and I think we've done it in a non-partisan way. I do think this is one of the few opportunities we will have during the course of this government's mandate to see all three parties agree on issues like this. I would think those who enjoy this kind of unanimity should savour the moment. There won't be very many. But on this one we were able to rise above our own partisan politics and do what was in the best interests of all Ontarians vis-à-vis their Ontario Parliament Building.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

On the motion by Mr Arnott for the adoption of the report of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

1630

MPPs PENSION AND COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA RÉTRIBUTION ET DU RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Sampson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to reform MPPs' pensions, to eliminate tax-free allowances and to adjust MPPs' compensation levels / Projet de loi 42, Loi portant réforme du régime de retraite des députés, éliminant les allocations non imposables et rajustant les niveaux de rétribution des députés.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): I'm pleased today to move second reading of Bill 42, An Act to reform MPPs' pensions, to eliminate tax-free allowances and to adjust MPPs' compensation levels.

This bill delivers on our commitment to abolish the MPPs' gold-plated pension plan and to get rid of our tax-

free allowances. With the passage of this bill, the salaries and total compensation paid to members will be open and understandable.

As the Minister of Finance indicated last week, this bill does away with the gold-plated pension plan which offers benefits well beyond those in pension plans available to other people in Ontario. As we promised in the Common Sense Revolution, the government will replace the pension plan with an RSP-type retirement savings arrangement for MPPs, much like those available to many other working Ontarians. Passage of this bill will also bring a major change to the way MPPs are paid and will reduce their total compensation.

The Ontario MPP Compensation Commission, an independent group of experts, after examining pay levels for a number of positions that carry similar responsibilities, recommended that the total compensation for members be \$110,000. The commission also calculated that in 1993 the true value of an MPP's compensation, taking into account the hidden, tax-free allowances and other benefits which most Ontarians do not get, was almost \$99,000.

This Legislature recently froze MPPs' compensation at social contract levels. This was, on the basis to that used by the compensation commission, \$93,389. With the passage of this bill, the salary for a member of this Legislature will be \$78,007 and associated benefits will be \$6,958. Adding the employer's RSP-type contribution of \$3,900, the total compensation package will be \$88,865. This is approximately 20% lower than the commission recommended, 10% lower than MPPs received in 1993 and approximately 5% below current levels.

I also want to advise members that some minor amendments to the legislation are required. I will be dealing with those in greater detail at the appropriate time in committee.

The passage of this bill will allow the public to know for the first time in Ontario's history exactly what members are paid and how they are paid. Its passage will end tax-free allowances and extra tax-free compensation for committee work. The measures in this bill to bring further openness and accountability to government are consistent with our commitment to reduce the cost and size of government. They are also consistent with the commitment we made in the Common Sense Revolution to restore the public's faith in the service of its elected members.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I don't think it will be a long debate this afternoon since, as you're aware, all three parties have indicated support for this bill, and it's not actually in the nature of an opposition leader to spend a great deal of time speaking in support of a government initiative. This initiative, however, is a little bit different because it affects every single member of the Legislature directly.

I can't think of another matter in which a member has a direct pecuniary interest, where we will benefit financially or perhaps not benefit financially but which affects us financially, in which a member would not declare a conflict of interest and not participate in a vote, and yet on this particular issue we are required to vote on legislation that sets our compensation as MPPs.

I don't think any member votes on their own compensation comfortably, and that is particularly true in these very difficult times of financial restraint and rather drastic cutbacks, but we have no alternative but to have legislators themselves take the responsibility of addressing and determining this issue.

There has been a succession of private sector, independent commissions established by successive governments and all have come back, in my memory, recommending salary increases for MPPs based on the comparisons they have made of the pay received by MPPs to that received by others that members of the commission would consider to be appropriate comparators. But in my memory, none of the recommendations of those independent commissions has ever been acted on, and members' pay has been, by and large, frozen for a number of years. I think the reason those independent commissions' recommendations have not been acted on is that successive governments, and indeed all MPPs in Ontario, have recognized that we have to set an example, and I believe that has been done.

Still, the issue of how MPPs are paid, as difficult as it is for members to address this matter of their own compensation, had to be addressed. It had to be addressed in this particular year because of a shared commitment to ensure that our full compensation was reported, was clearly understood and was fully taxable. The proposals on pay, on compensation for MPPs, that are before us today I believe achieve that goal, and it is for that reason our caucus will be supporting them.

The second issue that had to be addressed was the matter of MPPs' pensions. This matter had to be dealt with because pensions for MPPs were clearly out of step with pensions received by employees in either the public or the private sector. It had to be addressed in this particular session because all three parties were committed to reform of the current pension plan.

Our party was the first to set out in writing our commitment to specific changes to the MPPs' pension plan. The changes we had initially proposed included changing the minimum age at which a retired member could draw the pension to 55, ending double-dipping and requiring that members serve at least five years across two consecutive terms before they would qualify for a pension.

From that initial set of recommendations, we moved to endorse the conversion of the MPPs' pension plan to an RRSP. It seemed a simpler approach than modifications to the existing plan and certainly one which would be more clearly understood by the public. Our commitment to change from the MPPs' pension plan to an RRSP was one we made clear to all those who were seeking office as Liberal candidates in 1995. Therefore, since this proposal to convert existing pension plans to an RRSP follows through on that commitment, we will support the legislation and support the replacement of our pension plan with an RRSP contribution plan.

I further want to indicate that having seen the small number of proposed amendments to the original proposals, I appreciate that there has been some further clarification made to some specific sections of the act, and I think that was necessary.

I just want to add a further word because I do believe that this move from a pension plan to an RRSP is a direction of the future, that it's not just a direction for MPPs but is a direction we will see more widely in the public and the private sectors. If we look back, and I don't want to go too far back in time or take the time to go too far back, we'd probably recognize that the reason MPPs have had what the public has seen as a lucrative pension plan is because there has been no job security in elected office. There is still no job security in elected office. That is a reality of our business. But I think what's changed is that there is less and less job security for anybody these days. Increasingly, I think self-directed retirement plans are going to be the major source of retirement security for individuals.

As we move to change our pension plan to convert it to an RRSP, I want to challenge governments, to challenge this government, to challenge the federal government, to challenge future governments to deal with what I think is an important public policy issue and one we shouldn't wait too long to address; that is, how we can ensure the portability of pension plans and, perhaps more importantly, the ability to convert pension plans you qualify for in one workplace to an RRSP if you're changing your employment or your employment status. Without this, workers who change their jobs frequently throughout their careers—and that will be a reality of the future—or those who lose their jobs well into their working lives will not be able to ensure their financial independence on retirement. That would be a tremendous concern for future generations of retirees as well as for future governments.

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It is likely that there will be very few people in the future who will serve 25 to 30 years in one job and retire with a full pension. That is why I believe both that we are setting the way with our own changes to our pension plan with this bill, but that we must look at the challenge of how it should be further carried through in private and public sector policy.

Let me conclude by stressing the importance of the work done by members of the provincial Parliament. I think sometimes as we get caught up in the debates, we can lose sight of the value of the work that is done by individual members and the importance of the work that is done here. That importance therefore means it's important that we be able to recruit strong candidates, people from all fields, people who have a wide range of background and experience. That's why it is so important that the compensation for MPPs be fair as well as reasonable in the view of those who elect us, who pay our salaries and whom we represent.

Because we feel this legislation is presented in a sincere attempt to achieve that very essential goal, it will have our support.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I'll be brief. We'll be supporting the legislation, as we indicated before, but I do want to make a couple of general comments and then maybe a couple of specific comments.

First of all, specific on the process: We'll be doing second reading today. I understand there will be some

amendments coming when we get to the committee stage of the bill. There are a couple of questions that all of us have asked that we'll want some answers to from the government House leader when we get to the clause-by-clause examination of the bill.

I do want to say that for those of us who have been around this place for a while, dealing with MPPs' pay and pension has always been a very difficult issue. People can say that this is not the right time to look at properly raising MPPs' pay to what every independent commission or individual has ever said we should be getting paid. Look, I've been in this place during recession and during the boom time, and there's never a good time of dealing with MPPs' pay and pension. It's never politically popular.

There are people out there who, because politicians are not always viewed as being the most popular people in the world, would actually think the best thing we could do with MPPs' pension is not to roll it into an RRSP, but to take the money that's been contributed by us and by our employer, the assembly, and put it against the deficit, that we shouldn't be paid in this place; we should actually be paying to be in this place. I'm not personally wealthy, so what I could pay would be pretty minimal.

At some point members and others have to say—I agree with the editorial in the *Globe* today—that being an elected official in Ontario, in Canada, in any democratic society is a very important and honourable position to have. We can't continue to diminish the role of an elected official by saying we're taking a 5% cut here or we're taking a six-year freeze here, we're taking another 5% cut, when the reality is that if you look at some of the pay here and what people get in the private sector and even in other positions in the public sector, it becomes increasingly difficult to attract people to run for office, not because people want to make themselves personally wealthy, but because you have to have an adequate income to finance your family.

There are additional costs that come with being a member of provincial Parliament or a politician, whether it's banquet tickets, whether it's—I'm not going to get into any of the discussions we've had during question period in the last couple of days, but there are additional expenditures that we pay for out of our own pockets.

To constantly say we should be lowering MPPs' wages does nothing to make it accessible for people to be able to run for these positions. The goal has to be, obviously, to have a fair compensation package, a fair pension or retirement package, that will allow people to make that choice of whether they want to become directly involved as candidates in the democratic process.

I take a look, when we do our candidate searches for elections, and it's difficult. How do you approach a principal in a high school in Ontario's education system? "You have to take a cut in pay in order to come to the Ontario Legislature." That's not to say that principals are overpaid, that's not the point at all; the point is that it's not appropriate, even though it scores political points, to say we're constantly taking cuts in our pay.

I'm one who says we need to be fair. We can't be extravagant, we never should be extravagant, but we have to be fair and we have to have a package that will attract

good people to run for offices in all three of these political parties or whatever other political parties come along in this province.

In the meantime, I think this package at least moves to make the system more transparent, and I think that's appropriate. The tax-free portion was never appropriate, at least in the time I've been here. I remember when I got elected in 1977, the pay was \$14,000 basic pay and \$7,000 tax-free. We've moved away from the one third tax-free. At the local level, at the municipal council level and the school board level, it's still one third tax-free. I hope the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Education will take a look at that. I don't think it can be left to local discretion. It's provided for in our legislation and I think therefore we need to change our legislation.

As I was saying, this package, I think, at least makes our pay package, our pensions, RRSPs—it's all politics, but an RRSP is a pension, and we're now setting up a group pension plan that's going to be called an RRSP. It's like eliminating the GST by having the PST and the GST put together and having one. I guess it fulfils a campaign promise the Premier has made, and therefore we can go along with it, but it's still a pension plan.

I don't think we should apologize for having a pension plan. The average stay in this place is four years. The majority of people who serve in this place never were able to collect under the old pension plan. Even at the end of the 42-year reign of the Tory government, the average stay was seven years. So the majority of people at that point did not ever collect a full or even close to a full pension plan in this place.

The way it was always reported, and quite frankly reinforced by a lot of members of political parties who are represented here, gave everybody the impression that all you had to do is serve five years, get re-elected, and you got a full pension plan in this place. That simply was not true. In fact, if you serve on the Board of Internal Economy and you take a look at some of the pensions paid to widows, survivors, out of the I think 190 people drawing from the pension plan, you will see that most of those amounts are pretty small. You can pick out the two or three or four that are large. They're not representative because the average stay in this place is four years, and as I said before, after 42 years of one party in power, the average stay was seven.

1650

Let's keep it in some perspective. Let's not play to the National Citizens' Coalition and the group of people who have no respect for the political process or for government in general. Let's be honest with people. Let's make sure we have a system in place that attracts good candidates from all three political parties so we can have the highest quality possible in this assembly. That's only going to happen when you have fair pay, fair compensation, transparent pay, transparent compensation. I do believe this is a step in the right direction, one we can support.

I'll finish by saying that we always had this simplistic view in the past that you could have independent commissions. For years, you will remember, we had recommendations that came forward from the Commission on

Election Finances that always recommended what our pay should be and every year it was a ritual that the Premier of the day would take the report and would make a headline by saying, "We reject the recommendation because it calls for a pay increase." It guaranteed that one day a year the Premier got good press. It was a farce.

No matter how arm's-length the process is, the decision always is going to come back to the legislators, because if you have an independent commission, the fact is you can always overrule the independent commission by passing legislation in here. The buck has to stop here. That's what we're elected for, and I hope that while we take this step today, we will also take a look in the future, when it's appropriate, to have a pay that is in line with the kinds of recommendations that are made.

The independent commission: You will remember the Premier said he was going to set up an independent group of people to take a look at pay and he was going to instantaneously implement those recommendations. You will note that he didn't. He got a good day's headline by rejecting the recommendations. The fact is that he instead chose to take the populist approach, to attack politicians by saying we're going to have a 20% reduction in pay. We'll support that. That's going to happen. That's what will be implemented. But I say that at some point the democratic process is going to suffer if we do not start looking at what is fair, what is competitive and what will attract the best people to be elected in this place.

You and I know that no member of this place will ever be elected or defeated on the basis of accepting or rejecting a fair compensation package. The democratic process has a little more integrity to it than that. At some point we've got to bite the bullet, do what's right, put in place a system that attracts people from all walks of life and allows political parties to go and get the best candidates to provide the strongest democracy in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions or comments? Further debate? Would the parliamentary assistant like to say a few words to sum up?

Mr Sampson: No, thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sampson has moved second reading of Bill 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Mr Sampson: Committee of the whole.

The Acting Speaker: Committee of the whole House.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate? I believe the leader of the official opposition had the floor yesterday.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I'm happy to resume debate, unless our deputy whip indicates that there is another member who is waiting for an opportunity to continue the debate. I do believe that is the

case so, Madam Speaker, if I do not continue the debate, can another member of our party pick up the discussion at this point?

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Yes, that's fine. Further debate. The member for Oakwood.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Thank us.

Mr Colle: Thank you to the House for your condolences and sympathies and opportunities.

I'm here to speak on Bill 34, and there are two aspects of Bill 34 I'd like to touch on. The first aspect is the impact on junior kindergarten. As you know, this essentially paves the way for the so-called local option on junior kindergarten. The pattern we see developing across this province is that because the local boards have really been so severely cut back and they're also going through assessment losses, many junior kindergarten programs are being dropped. This, to me, is essentially a regressive trend this bill is supporting. It is not something that's going to be beneficial to the educational system, nor will it be beneficial to society as a whole, because as we all know, an investment in education at an early stage has a positive impact all the way through the school system.

One of the interesting things: I remember one time a couple of years ago at Metro. It was after the unfortunate murder of ViVi Leimonis, who was shot and killed. We had a special task force that Metro set up to look at dealing with crime in the community and how we could respond. The police were under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Toronto, so we brought in a number of experts and we also brought in, I remember, a criminologist from the University of Ottawa who is now the head of the crime prevention bureau in Montreal. We asked him as a criminologist what he would recommend we should do or where we should invest our resources, being limited, if we wanted to really have an impact on crime. He really cut to the chase very quickly. He said:

"Listen, if you are really serious about this and you want to really have an impact, and a serious impact, you would start to invest resources in early childhood education. If you wanted to reduce the incidence of crime in your community, that's where it begins. Once children at a very early age don't have the proper educational, social setting, this is when the roots of crime are laid in communities."

Junior kindergarten is not solely an educational opportunity; it is also a social opportunity. Children at this age have to socialize in order to interact with their peers, in order to understand that their whole life is going to be with other people. Junior kindergarten has an extreme level of importance in terms of socialization skills.

1700

Children all across this province are going to be deprived not only of that educational opportunity at that very early and sensitive age; they are going to be deprived of the socialization opportunities in a structured setting where you're learning how to interact, how to deal with interpersonal challenges at that age. They do have them. This is what is going to be eroded as a result of Bill 34.

What we're going to see is a checkerboard pattern of early childhood education right across this province: The have and the have-not boards; the have and the have-not communities. If there are dollars available, there will be junior kindergarten programs. The sad thing is that many communities that are resource-poor or assessment-poor—and they probably need the early childhood education more than some of the well-to-do communities—will not invest in junior kindergarten. So the young children who need the investment most, who need a structured early childhood education system in place most, are not going to have it available to them.

This is really contradictory to a pattern of education that has been established in Ontario which, despite all its flaws and criticisms, I think has borne up quite well if you compare the system. I know we have all kinds of analyses with Japan and everywhere, but if you look at the educational system in Ontario, it's always tried to be uniformly equal across the province in terms of providing services and providing opportunities.

We've built good schools—elementary schools, high schools, colleges—right across this province in almost every community. That was a hallmark of provincial governments that went previously. We attempted to understand that there were communities that could not afford resources to provide junior education—junior kindergarten, as an example—and the provincial government supported that effort, and I think Ontario benefited.

This is again one of the major flaws of Bill 34, that it cements this withdrawal of support from junior kindergarten education, especially when we know from the Royal Commission on Learning that the recommendation was even to start school earlier because of the serious impact that the deprivation of a good educational setting had on children.

If we want to talk about competition and we want to talk about having competitive educational systems in place, you've got to start with children at that age. If you don't start there, you're going to be paying for remedial education processes, special education. You'll be paying 10 times down the road in terms of extra support, dropout rates and who knows what other negative result of that. That investment, junior kindergarten, being made by boards and taxpayers is a very good investment in communities and children right across this province.

This province is becoming a little schizophrenic when it talks about—they're all excited about investing in boot camps. Every time you turn on a radio or television everybody is getting all hot and bothered about boot camps. On the other hand, they're turning off and closing down junior kindergarten programs.

Someone looking at Ontario from afar would say: "What kind of a province is this where money is being spent on boot camps and taken out of junior kindergarten or early childhood education? This is nuts." It is not only nuts in an educational perspective, it's nuts in terms of a social or economic return.

It doesn't make economic or educational sense to be all excited about boot camp investment and turning away junior kindergarten investment. We'll look back on this regressive approach and say it was to the detriment of everybody in Ontario that we didn't have enough

resources and a system in place to ensure that you had junior kindergarten in place right across this province. We'll pay big time for this down the road.

Another area I want to talk about is another recommendation in Bill 34. This is an area that deals with another new precedent, the famous clawback proposal. It's the proposal to enable, encourage, persuade negative grant boards to give up property tax dollars to the provincial government.

This is something I know many people from outside of the negative grant boards, outside of Toronto and Ottawa, may think, "This is good because we're going to share in some of the riches that there are in Toronto or in Ottawa and we'll all benefit." But there's a very critical principle you have to realize: Once you have a provincial government that dips into locally collected property taxes and uses them for provincial purposes, you are setting a precedent that could affect all communities across Ontario. Because if you go back through Canadian history, back to Confederation and the BNA Act, you'll see there's been a precedent where locally collected taxes were used for locally mandated services, and therefore you had local accountability and local responsibility for those locally collected taxes.

Initially, as you know, those taxes were used to fix roads and to provide water services; they were used for essential local amenities and local structures that people could use in that city, town, village or hamlet.

Now this provincial government is about to do something that's dramatically different. It's an intrusion into a new taxing area that's been the purview of local government, and that is the collection of property taxes.

No matter how vague and how indirect the language is, we certainly understand what the intent of this legislation is: It's to tell, either by persuasion or by threat or by intimidation, the negative grant boards, that is, Toronto and Ottawa, "You'd better cough up some of your local property taxes or else we'll amalgamate you, we'll cut off other supports the government does." This is the threat that hangs over Metro and over the city of Ottawa.

I tell those of you who think this is a good idea to remember that once a provincial government or any government steps into one taxing area, to get it to withdraw is extremely difficult. Once they make this intrusion into local property taxation, they will want to keep it because they've established the right to do so, and that's what Bill 34 does.

In essence, what it is is taxation without representation. It means that a provincial government will now have the right to collect and use taxes collected by the trustees, for instance, who get elected on whether they raise or increase property taxes locally. The provincial government, which isn't elected based on local collection of property taxes, now is going to take that money out of municipalities that have no control over what the provincial government does. So you're creating a scary precedent here: taxation without representation.

As you know, in the past local ratepayers have been very annoyed, especially in the city of Toronto, in the city of Ottawa, in North York, Etobicoke, East York and York. They see that they pay 100% of elementary-secondary education out of property tax. They have not

received any provincial grants for a number of years. They've been self-sustaining and they've paid for education out of local property taxes. The seniors on fixed income, the small businesses, the big businesses, have been paying for education directly through property taxes. They said, "Okay, we're doing that, we don't like it; education shouldn't even be on the property tax because it's a regressive tax" etc.

Every time you go to a door, they say, "There's no darn way I should be paying 55% of my taxes towards education." They're already angry with that because they feel it's regressive. They could be unemployed; they could be a senior. They can't afford to pay the \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$2,000 a year on taxes for their property that are going towards education, because they say, "In most other jurisdictions, or outside of Metro, the province is paying for education, and why should we be footing the bill for this?"

If you talk to business people in Metro, they say they're paying 40% more on their commercial taxes than they would be if they were outside of Metro, a 40% premium, and they think that's unfair. One of the reasons they say it's unfair is because they're supporting education, and why should they be treated differently than a business that's in another city or outside of Metro? So there already is a 40% premium. Now this provincial government is going to come along and say: "Hey, that 40% premium isn't enough. We're going to ask for more money out of the property taxes of Toronto to go into the provincial coffers." This is like a double whammy for them and this is an especially acute problem if you look at what's happened to Toronto in the last number of years. There's been an exodus of businesses, as you know, Madam Speaker, because they can't pay the existing taxes. They're being forced to close their doors and they're leaving, and some of them are even setting up shop outside of Metro's boundaries because of this premium and penalty.

1710

This government promised it was going to come in and help these people to stay in Toronto, it was going to fix the hole-in-a-doughnut effect where we've got this exodus of industrial-commercial property assessment, people leaving—"We were going to fix that and help you stay in Toronto and level the playing field." All of a sudden, they're saying: "Oh, no. In the meantime, while we level the playing field, we're going to give you another kick," and this kick is in Bill 34. It's this clawback out of Toronto taxpayers and a clawback that couldn't have happened at a worse time, and that's what this bill is doing. The minister has got all this double-speak and gobbledygook, "enabling," and "We're going to persuade you." We know darned well it's an ultimatum: "You either give up your property tax dollars to us or we'll get rid of you or we'll hit you another way." This is not the way it works.

As you know, presently in Toronto there's a sharing of taxes among the six municipalities, but they share that willingly, and that was done voluntarily and it works out well, because a lot of people live and work across the borders, they have businesses in one area—I know a friend of mine just opened up a business in East York

there and his kids go to school in Toronto. So it makes sense to share taxes between East York and Toronto, and he's happy to run his business on Bayview, and at the same time he lives off St Clair where I am. That's the way it works and the sharing has worked, but that sharing was done voluntarily, and the property taxpayers and the trustees and those who were accountable for those tax rates agreed to it, and it was something that went through the process. This is a back-door grab of that tax base, and I say to you, it is the beginning of something that could spread. If it happens in Toronto, why not Oakville next, or Burlington, or Markham? Once you allow this to happen, it could even go to Oshawa, which is very tax-assessment-rich.

So I say to all the members on the opposite side, I know there's a tendency to say, "Toronto's got all this money, all these tax dollars; let's dip into Toronto's rich resources," but once you do that, you're leaving the door open for a new intrusion into locally collected taxes that are the responsibility of the local councillors or the local trustees who are accountable to those property taxpayers, and this blatant clawback, claw-out, of local property taxes is not going to do anything to help people in other communities. What it's going to do is essentially mean you've got the potential of more tax revenues being grabbed out of local communities, because once you can do it here, as I said, you can do it anywhere. And secondly, it takes the province off the hook, because as the trustees get all the flak for raising taxes, it's the province that's going to take the money out and not be accountable for that.

Another area that Bill 34 infringes upon is the tradition that's been long established of local democracy. Once the provincial government now enters into this tax field, where is the accountability, the involvement, the responsibility of the local trustees and local councillors, once you have this clawback put in place?

If I could speak to what is happening in Metro, what is happening in cities—I know a lot of members have been told there's all kinds of excess and so forth, and no doubt there's always room for efficiencies, restructuring which can be beneficial. But one of the recognitions you have to make is that the situation in Metro is quite unique. In my own area, the city of York, we have a constant influx of immigrants who have different languages, who don't have the ability to—never mind take English courses; they can't do basics in school from an early age.

What this does is put an extra burden on the local school system. I think 50% of all the immigrants who come to Canada come to Metro. So all the schools in Metropolitan Toronto have to deal with this challenge, and these people have a great deal of potential, but you can't really benefit by the potential unless the educational system is able to adapt.

Over the last decades, the educational boards in Metro have set in place programs: English as a second language; they've had support programs to acclimatize, to socialize the new immigrants. These children and new adults have been able to socialize, integrate, and they've been very productive members of our cities. The schools were carrying that burden.

I'm not sure the degree to which you have that kind of challenge in communities all over Ontario, but I know certainly statistically this reality of dealing with an influx of people that need language support puts an enormous burden on Toronto schools. It probably does the same thing for parts of Brampton and maybe other schools too. But there is an acute need to deal with this reality here which may not be the reality in Gravenhurst, may not be the reality in Kenora, but schools have to deal with this on a daily basis. So you may have to spend extra resources on English-as-a-second-language programs. You may have to do that. You may need more counselling for some of these children who have a hard time adjusting. So there are expenses in inner-city schools.

Also, if you look at the per capita income, I know in my community you have the lowest per capita income or household income in Metro. Many of these children need support. Their parents or their parent may not have the ability to give them the support at home, and the fact that their income is essentially below what is the poverty line puts enormous pressures on the family and that child.

Therefore, historically in Toronto, the schools have picked up the slack. If you go to any school in the city of York, you go to a school in Long Branch, you go to a school in East York, you'll see that there are children entering the schools constantly from different countries with the willingness to learn but they need the extra support, and the teachers and the school boards have gone out of their way to do that.

Many people that are new immigrants also suffer from, as I said, a lack of income, because they're just starting out. They're having a hard time getting housing, getting clothing, getting work, so the schools have been almost like a buffer to allow them to integrate better, and they've done this very well. That's been one of the successes, as I said, of our school system. There are very few countries in the world, their cities, that have had this challenge. If you go to Rome or you go to, let's say, Boston or you go to other cities, international cities, they do not have this constant influx of immigrants. We have handled the immigrants in a positive way.

I'm an immigrant myself. We have always had an opportunity to learn the language, to be educated, because the school doors were always open. The Toronto school board doors were open, the York school boards were open, and they offered the help: language upgrading skills, socialization skills. The schools did this, and this is one of the reasons why there's been an extra cost to be borne in Toronto.

1720

That's not to say there hasn't been any waste, but the problem right now is that what this bill is trying to say is, "Hey, there's too much money in Toronto, so we're going to take it out," without appreciating the challenges they have. Many schools in Toronto are faced—when I say Toronto, I mean Metro, and I'm sure it's the same with school boards all across Ontario—with unbelievable challenges. They have a minister who gives a different signal every day. For months we heard about this toolbox: "The toolbox is coming." It was like the second coming, and that was going to solve—

Interjection.

Mr Colle: Yes, it was a fishing box with a lot of hooks in it. What was happening was that a lot of trustees, I think in good faith, thought that toolbox was going to help them solve the shortfall problem.

As you know, the minister's tool box was essentially empty. There was nothing in it to give the school boards the ability to deal with the problem, so the problem was left in the hands of local schools. Local schools are under enormous pressure to deal with massive cuts in funding, loss of assessment, and all they got from the minister were threats and an empty toolbox.

Local trustees feel that they are being used, they are being set up to solve the problems that the minister created, because the minister created the crisis, he created the anticipation, he has teachers up in arms, he has parents up in arms, he has students anxious—adult education students, junior kindergarten students—he has everybody in this high state of anxiety. The crisis has been created, and no solution.

Bill 34 is basically the leftovers in the empty toolbox. It's really a fraud. There is nothing in here that's going to help trustees, there is nothing in here that's going to help school boards; it's a phony attempt to cover the minister for his failed attempt to deliver on solving the crisis and the anxiety and the fear and the loathing he created over the last number of months in education.

You have the trustees trying to solve an unsolvable problem: You have cuts that are affecting children; you have this back-door clawback of property taxes, trying to bail the minister out, that is probably unconstitutional. I hope the city of Toronto and the city of Ottawa take this minister to the Supreme Court on this because it's a violation of the basic principle of taxation with representation. I hope this is the last time that a government tries to intrude on local property taxes in a way that is contrary to the basic principle of local democracy and local accountability. That is what's wrong with this bill.

I tell people across the province and members across this province, "Don't let the minister get away with it, because it's the beginning of a very nasty precedent of essentially tapping into your property taxes to solve the problem that he created." This is what Bill 34 is all about and we have to oppose it. I hope those of you in caucus who have been local trustees or local aldermen will stand up and tell the minister: "This is wrong. You can't use local property taxes for this purpose in this way. It is intimidation. Trying to get property taxes, which are stretched to the limit, to solve a province-wide problem of education funding is not the right way to solve a funding problem." I hope the caucus of the Conservative Party speaks loud and clear on this issue. As you know, it's just Toronto and Ottawa now but it could be, as I've said, Oakville next, Mississauga next. Once the principle is established, I don't think there's any turning back.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I felt that perhaps the member would withdraw his unparliamentary language at one point, but he didn't choose to. You cannot stand in this House and accuse a minister of the crown of fraud, and that's indeed what he said.

Mr Colle: I did not do that. I said the bill is a fraud.

Mrs Marland: You will enjoy re-reading Hansard and then you will know what you've said.

I think it's time we got something straight in this province. You invited comments from former trustees, which I have been with the Peel board for four years; you invited comments from other trustees who understand the funding issues and the complex issues about the provision of education in this province.

One thing I must admit I get tired of is Metro trustees, Metro councillors, and in your case a former Metro councillor, talking about the uniqueness and the problems of Toronto schools. This afternoon in particular you were talking about the problems for new immigrant families. I wish some time you would visit some of the schools in Peel, where we might have 90% of the children in a classroom that are all immigrant families. Indeed, in a city of half a million people, the city of Mississauga, we have the same inner-city problems that the city of Toronto has. So the differential in funding and the differential in the grant formulas shouldn't exist on the basis of those arguments.

I ask you not to comment in such a negative way about the signals from our Minister of Education. He did not create this crisis that we're dealing with today, the funding of education, and the one thing I really agree with is that it should be off the property taxes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member delivered, of course, an excellent speech on this. I observed this carefully and listened and he certainly makes a very good point.

I didn't want to cut off the member for Etobicoke West because I know he would be rising to agree with the member for Oakwood, particularly on the raid on the property taxes of Etobicoke taking place by the Minister of Education of this government. I know the member wanted to, and if he didn't, he really wanted to, make reference to the excellent question directed to the Minister of Education by the member for Etobicoke West just a few days ago. It was an unexpected question; you could tell that. It was not a trumped-up, lined-up question at all. It was delivered with a good deal of force and verve and I want to compliment the member for Etobicoke West on that because I see that he wishes to rise and I know he's agreeing with those comments that were made by the member.

It's very attractive, I can tell you, for the people of St Catharines to think that somehow they're going to be getting the property taxes from Ottawa and Toronto. But if they think about it, particularly the people who serve at the municipal level, as my friend from Etobicoke West has and the member for Oakwood has, if you serve at the municipal level, you know that the principle of raiding property taxes to bring the money into the provincial coffers—and that's the consolidated revenue fund, not any other fund; that's the general coffers of the provincial government—is a very dangerous precedent. I am sure the member for Etobicoke West will more eloquently than I and more forcefully than I register an honest and sincere and genuine complaint about the action of the present administration in raiding those property tax dollars, so I will yield the floor to him.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I listened to the speech of the member for Oakwood very carefully, I'd say even more closely than the member for St

Catharines. In particular, I listened to the comments that were early on in the speech by the member for Oakwood where he was referring to how junior kindergarten, which I think is a very important part of our education system, is being eroded by the government, and I agree with the member on that.

We took many years in the province to move to universal kindergarten. Over the last number of years, many jurisdictions in the province have developed junior kindergarten, and then when we were government, we moved forward with legislation, an amendment to the Education Act, to make junior kindergarten mandatory and then by regulation phase it in over three years.

What confused me, though, about the speech from the member for Oakwood was that there was a complete forgetfulness on the part of the Liberal member for Oakwood that when the amendment to the Education Act came forward by our government to make junior kindergarten mandatory, the Liberals voted against it. They fought it. They said this should be a local decision made at the local school board level and it should not be mandatory. I don't understand where the conversion took place. This is another example of the Liberals trying to have it both ways. They say one thing when the bill's before the House making it mandatory and they oppose that, and now the Tory bill's here saying, "We'll make it optional," and they oppose that. I don't know. What position will they take next Monday?

1730

Mr Stockwell: The member for Windsor-Riverside made a point that I felt needed to be made about the Liberals' policy position with respect to junior kindergarten. I will add, in defence of the member for Oakwood, that he was not a member of the last Parliament—

Mr Cooke: But was he a member of the Liberal Party?

Mr Stockwell: —but he was a member in good standing of the Liberal Party; he probably was. But I know my good friend from St Catharines was here last session and probably had a lot of input into the decision of the day not to support making junior kindergarten mandatory, and he's probably had a lot of input in the decision not to support junior kindergarten as an optional decision. It will be interesting one day when the good member for St Catharines stands in his place and tells us what exactly the position of the Liberal Party is with respect to junior kindergarten.

Mr Bradley: Strongly in favour.

Interjections: Of what?

Mr Stockwell: And that's the key. As my friend from Simcoe East, now the Speaker, used to say, "Some of my constituents are for it, some of them are agin it, and I'm with my constituents." It's probably the Liberal credo.

I want to address the issue of junior kindergarten. I think I've addressed the other issue very clearly. The study we took about early childhood education talked about educating kids as early as two years old. Many people in the socialist party and others, the Liberals and so on, have argued about early childhood education. Two years of age was the recommendation. It seems to me you can cut this thing back as far as you want to and you can never be in a situation where you're buying into what the

supposed experts are telling you when you should educate kids.

In my opinion, it comes down to a dollars-and-cents issue, and that dollar-and-cent issue can be decided on a local neighbourhood basis far better than it can in the august chamber of the Parliament of the province.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oakwood, sum up, please.

Mr Colle: I know the NDP like to fight yesterday's battles or yesterday's elections, but the fact is that a dramatic change is taking place in this province. If they want to dwell on the past and play games of who said what when, they're going to lose big-time, because the enemy is on the other side. That's the message. The enemies of junior kindergarten are quite clear in Bill 34. It is a good investment, and this bill basically removes the possibility for all children in Ontario to have junior kindergarten.

The critical thing here is that there are more and more amendments and changes to the Education Act. There has to be an evaluation of the impact these changes have on children, their families, their communities and also the impact they have on local taxpayers. This bill is bad for local property taxpayers. It's abhorrent. It's something they should storm with tea in the Toronto harbour, in Long Branch harbour. This is the stuff that revolutions are made of, when you start doing taxation without representation, as in Bill 34. It is something a government has no right to do, and they are trying to get away with it. I know that a lot of members on that side, the member for Mississauga South etc, know this is wrong. You cannot grab local property taxpayers to fix the provincial funding problems in education. It is the wrong way to do it, and we all know that if we look at it. It's not justifiable.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): Point of order, Madam Speaker: I seek unanimous approval of the House to indicate the business for next week for the House.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): Pursuant to standing order 55 and on behalf of the government House leader, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of April 22, 1996.

On Monday, April 22, we hope to do committee of the whole and third reading of Bill 42, the MPPs' pension act, and third reading of Bill 44, the Election Amendment Act, after which we will continue with second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act.

On Tuesday, April 23, if Bill 34 is not complete, we will continue with second reading. After that is complete, we will begin second reading of Bill 39, the Ontario Highway Transport Board and Public Vehicles Amendment Act.

On Wednesday, April 24, we will continue with the unfinished business from Tuesday, after which we will begin second reading of Bill 38, the Toronto Islands Amendment Act.

For Thursday morning, private members' business, we will consider ballot item 23 standing in the name of the member for Oriole and ballot item 24 standing in the name of the member for Dovercourt. In the afternoon of Thursday, April 25, we will continue with any unfinished business for the week.

I would also like to say a sincere thank you to the fine young men and women, young boys and girls who are here as our legislative pages for their last day, and on behalf of all members of the House we want to wish them all best wishes for their future endeavours.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996
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(continued)

The Acting Speaker: We will now resume debate on Bill 34.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I'm happy to participate in second reading debate on Bill 34, the Education Amendment Act, and to discuss our government's plan to find savings in the education sector.

Before I get into the prepared remarks I have, I want to comment on a little debate the member opposite had with the member for Etobicoke West when they talked about Dr Fraser Mustard. In citing Dr Fraser Mustard, he's right to say that Dr Mustard advises that young people should be educated as early as possible, but what he conveniently leaves out, if he has ever attended any of Dr Mustard's seminars or lectures, is that Dr Mustard points out there are productive and consumptive sides to the economy. He freely admits that the consumptive side, the non-income-generating side, currently takes too much money out of the productive side of the economy and until that adjustment is made, the issue is one, like the member for Etobicoke West pointed out, of dollars and cents. Even Dr Mustard understands the problems we have in our economy and that if we don't address those problems in our economy, we are going to have a lot of problems being able to afford education at an early age for our kids.

Last month, our government announced savings of \$400 million for the 1996-97 fiscal year. This level of savings represents roughly 3% of the \$14 billion spent on education in Ontario. That's really not that oppressive when compared to some of the reductions faced by other institutions who are deftly handling larger reductions and maintaining services.

The goal of this act is to provide local boards of education with the tools necessary to achieve savings in order to guarantee funding for classroom education. This act identifies savings that can be achieved outside the classroom in areas such as transportation, school board administration, custodial and maintenance expenditures, a moratorium on capital projects and changes to teachers' sick leave plans. These initiatives reflect our commitment in the Common Sense Revolution to guarantee funding for classroom education and, at the same time, find savings elsewhere in the education system.

We are bringing in this legislation because in our discussions with parents, students, trustees, school board

officials, teachers and taxpayers, three items were clearly conveyed to us. People believe that there is a waste in our education system and that savings can be realized in education. People also believe it is vital for Ontario to bring its spending in line with other provinces.

By any measure, ministry generated or even OSSTF generated, Ontario currently spends \$1 billion more, or about \$500 per child, on education than the average of the other provinces. Current overspending, which is a clear vestige of past governments, poses the greatest threat to classroom education.

1740

The second thing the public clearly conveyed was that Ontario taxpayers believe there must be an opportunity to develop solutions locally. As the member for Etobicoke West had enunciated earlier, it is key that we let those decisions be made at the local level.

The third thing taxpayers told us was that while it is important to find savings, the government should allow time for local institutions to develop a fair plan which will ensure quality programming for all Ontario students.

As a result of our discussions with Ontarians, our government has carefully developed this legislation to find these savings. This particular piece of legislation is based on three identifiable goals: Classroom funding should be protected, a framework should be established which will allow for local decision-making and locally negotiated solutions, and local taxes should not be increased.

I'd like to elaborate upon each of these goals so that the people of Ontario and the citizens of my riding of Niagara Falls will know where our party and government are headed in this manner.

First, our government is committed to maintaining funding for classroom education and at the same time finding savings in areas outside classroom education in order to ensure that Ontarians receive quality classroom education. I want to make it abundantly clear to all members of the House and to the public that in the last election we never promised not to find savings in the education system. We never promised to keep the status quo. In fact, we promised to find savings in the education system so that we can preserve the most important and vital part of the elementary and secondary education system: classroom instruction.

On the matter of savings in education and protecting classroom education, the Common Sense Revolution specifically says: "Classroom funding for education will be guaranteed. That does not mean that savings cannot be found elsewhere in the education system. Too much money is now being spent on consultants, bureaucracy and administration. Not enough is being invested in students directly." It goes on to say, "Our principle of 'classroom-based budgeting' will help ensure that this essential service is protected and, indeed, that excellence in education and training is enhanced." As you can see, our party is committed to both maintaining funding for classroom education and at the same time finding savings outside of classroom education.

The second goal of this legislation is to allow decisions and solutions to be locally driven. Our government realizes that a top-down, heavy-handed measure imposed by the Minister of Education on teachers, unions, school

boards and students would be overbearing and would certainly violate our party's principles of community and local accountability. Our government believes these local officials were elected by local people to do a job and that they should be allowed to do that job. Our government believes that education policy should be brought closer to the people because it allows members of the public greater accessibility to educational matters and also enhances local accountability. Our government realizes that one solution is not appropriate for all school boards across the province, and therefore we chose to advance a framework which will be shaped by local input.

All decisions, it should be noted, currently being taken by school boards across the province today are being taken by locally, democratically elected school board trustees. I encourage Ontarians, if you don't like their decisions, to tell them. Make them accountable for your tax dollars. Ask them to explain the thousands budgeted on courier services, the tens of millions budgeted for transportation, the hundreds of thousands spent on mileage and other expenses. They should be held accountable, and Ontarians should talk to their school board trustees.

There are a number of measures contained in this bill which recognize the principle of local input. For instance, Bill 34 makes the delivery of junior kindergarten a local choice by eliminating the compulsory requirement that school boards offer junior kindergarten. This mandatory requirement is a clear example of education bureaucrats dictating the needs of a particular school board when it is apparent that there has been no consultation, no local input and no clear consensus in the community that such a service is desired.

Some will argue that this measure compromises our commitment to classroom education and hurts young children. What the critics are neglecting to tell the people of Ontario is that the Ontario government will continue to share the costs of junior kindergarten with the local boards. In other words, junior kindergarten will be funded at the same rate of grant as other grade levels, from senior kindergarten to grade 13. Beginning this September, junior kindergarten costs will be borne by both the boards and the province. Before this time, the province fully funded JK. Prior funding arrangements not only undermined and ignored any local say in the delivery of junior kindergarten but it also was a costly arrangement for the taxpayers of Ontario.

Bill 34 also allows local school boards more flexibility to determine the administrative structure of their schools; to negotiate the number of sick days by removing the number of sick days to which teachers are entitled, if they so choose; and finally, to increase cooperation with other local boards and public agencies by authorizing school boards to enter into cooperative agreements with other boards, public sector agencies and other organizations as prescribed by regulation, and require school boards to report annually on cooperative initiatives taken or explored to improve efficiency.

I'd like to address this issue of sharing. Many boards I hope around the province will look further into this. Colleges have gotten together to share costs of insurance and spread that around. They've saved millions in doing that.

In Nova Scotia, the universities just got together on a consortium to share some of their costs. They announced in an April 9, 1996, article in the *Globe and Mail* a saving of \$17 million through these types of initiatives.

Finally, I'd like to point out that Haldimand-Norfolk is a board that's moving to greater efficiencies. They are going to merge and amalgamate their school bus system to find great savings.

These are the types of things that need to be done throughout the school system. They're savings that are available without affecting the classroom, and other boards should take heed.

I would like to address the third goal of this legislation, that local taxes should not be increased. Our \$400-million saving amounts to an average reduction of 2% for each school board. The size of this reduction can be accommodated without having to lay off a large number of teachers or increasing local taxes.

I'd like to bring up at this point an article from the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*. Several of our members are from this area and they're to be commended. I'll read from the article quickly:

"The Waterloo County Board of Education has passed its budget, and guess what? The sky has not fallen. Forget dire rumblings of an educational apocalypse with massive losses of teachers and programs, and classrooms bursting at the seams. Instead, if everything goes as planned, no full-time teachers will be laid off and classes will stay the same size.

"For months they have been told Ontario's educational system could be in ruins because the Conservatives are cutting...funding. In February, the board said as many as 300 high school teachers in the public board alone could lose their jobs.

"...school children came home bearing letters prophesying the decline and fall of education as we know it.

"But...Waterloo's public board has spared its classrooms and teachers serious discomfort."

"Many taxpayers will wonder what all the moaning and groaning was about, at least in this board. The Tories said their cuts would be made without harming the classroom. Here...they were right."

I commend the Waterloo County Board of Education for dealing intelligently with its cuts. Their example is one that should be followed. I congratulate them here today.

Boards must work with unions, teachers, parent councils and taxpayers in order to devise creative solutions that will bring about savings. Savings must be found in transportation, school board administration, custodial and maintenance, capital projects and remuneration in order to ensure that classroom education is not adversely affected. It can be done, as I've shown you some examples today.

This government's announcement of a moratorium on new capital projects, except for health and safety projects and for those projects which receive final approval under the ministry's capital grant plan, will yield savings of \$167 million out of the \$400 million. This measure will facilitate and mitigate the efforts of school boards finding savings outside the classroom budget.

What this all means is that savings can be achieved without an increase in local property taxes or the laying off of a large number of teachers. The \$400 million in savings can be found in the education system while guaranteeing funding for classroom ed.

The Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force report, otherwise known as the Sweeney report, found that 47% of education expenditures are spent outside the classroom. This report recommended that this figure be lowered to 40%. Clearly, the reductions we have announced are achievable within that 47%. The authors of this report, and others, maintain that savings can be found in the system so that quality classroom education can be protected.

1750

Our government's goal to find savings began in the July 21 financial statement when we announced expenditure reductions of \$32 million, which were made outside of the classroom. In addition, the changes in funding policy with regard to junior kindergarten and adult education programming resulted in a further savings of \$120 million. Savings of \$65 million are also available to school boards by reducing expenditures in the areas of board administration and custodial and maintenance services.

Our government also expects boards to find at least another \$16 million in savings in their transportation budgets. Looking at the budgets of some of the school boards across the province, I've noted that transportation costs as a percentage of the entire budget have gone up in the last few years in great leaps, and that is clearly an area where we can cut. I believe we can get more than \$16 million in savings from that area.

As well, a one-year moratorium on new capital projects will yield the remainder of the savings: \$167 million.

Clearly, achieving the objective of these reductions is possible without affecting the classroom. In short, our government has consulted with many stakeholders in the education sector—teachers, trustees, union leaders, parents and taxpayers—and through our discussions with them we have developed a piece of legislation which will give local school boards the flexibility to achieve savings and at the same time continue to deliver quality education.

While I'm on that subject of consultation, I'd like to note for the information of the members of the House and for my constituents that our Minister of Education and Training has spent approximately 25% of his time over the last few months consulting with stakeholders in the education sector. I don't think there are many ministers in the past, or even in the future, who can boast that kind of record, and he deserves to be commended for that.

Our government is committed to guaranteeing classroom education funding. Without finding the savings today, our classroom education will only deteriorate in the future. We must protect today's students and future students from the reckless overspending of the past. The actions we are taking today will preserve quality education for future generations of Ontarians.

Mr Colle: I have a few comments. The member for Niagara Falls certainly articulated his party's position. The trouble is, there are very major contradictions. He

talks about local autonomy and local accountability, but Bill 34 usurps the local accountability of trustees to collect taxes, because it's going to dip into local property taxes. How does that relate to local accountability? That's the precedent of this bill. It certainly flies in the face of local accountability when that clawback comes into place.

In terms of consultation, if they had really wanted consultation, if the minister is doing such a fine job, why are there not province-wide hearings on this bill? Why not take this bill and let the people of Niagara Falls talk face to face with the minister and his staff about what this bill means to children? Take it to Kenora. Take it to Cornwall. Take it to Ottawa. Let them know what the minister is doing to education. If you wanted to consult, why are you not in favour of consultation on a province-wide basis? That's another contradiction.

The other thing is in terms of achieving the so-called savings, which is the jargon for cuts. They're cutting education for one reason: to find money for the tax cut for the wealthy. You're taking money out of the system for that reason alone—for no other reason.

When you talk about "classroom," transportation is linked to classroom education. If children can't get to their school, what good is the educational facility? Transportation is linked. You saw what happened in Dufferin-Peel when the trustees were forced to make that decision to cut transportation. There was a near riot out there because they needed transportation for the rural children to get to school, and they stopped the cutback of transportation. You can't isolate clean classrooms or busing to classrooms and say it's outside the classroom. It's all connected.

Mrs Marland: I'd like to respond to the member for Oakwood a second time. There wasn't a near riot in the Peel Board of Education offices on the subject of busing. There was a public meeting and there was a very healthy debate and there was a very normal vote. That's what democracy is about. I'm glad that the Peel Board of Education gave that opportunity to the people they represent, and it was a very democratically conducted meeting.

I think it's unfortunate to refer to that process as being "a near riot." But more importantly, I think if you weren't as experienced as you are, dear member for Oakwood, I would expect you to stand in this House and say things as they are, not as you are interpreting them to be, because our government is simply trying to implement some of the recommendations of a former member of your party and indeed your Liberal government in Ontario, Mr Sweeney, a very creditable person who did a lot of work and studied the problems associated with the cost of education in this province and the funding and the provision of those educational programs. Many of the things that he said in his report I am sure you have to concede are true. One of them, and most importantly I think, that is of grave concern to our government is the fact that Mr Sweeney identified that 47% of the cost of education today in Ontario is money spent outside of the classroom. But I say again to you, there is one area on which you and I do agree, and that is that the cost of education—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired. The member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): May I begin by commenting to our member for Niagara Falls, our heartiest congratulations from your colleagues in casinos, and congratulations on you getting yours in Niagara Falls. I know that you and I are going to work well together in succeeding in getting our 10% of profits that the Premier had promised.

Throughout your speech today on education you talked about how you are going to meet your promises. So please remember that your Premier promised 10% of profits to host cities of casinos—yours and mine. Bart, I'm looking forward to working together with you on that project.

As far as your talk today on education, I feel I must clear the record, not necessarily for myself, but you quoted OSSTF as though somehow you and OSSTF were actually on the same page in this debate. For the sake of Earl Manners and their reputation, I have to clear the air. In fact, in an article entitled Agenda: Bankrupt, Destroy, Privatize, he says clearly that even the data the minister is using to justify his stance is rigged. The claim that Ontario spends 10% more per student than the average in Canada used pre-social contract figures, did not include Ontario in the Canadian average, and included kindergarten costs but excluded the enrolment in calculating the cost per pupil. Mr Manners, although he and I have not met, I'm sure will be pleased that we set the record straight, because I can tell you that we are not on the same page where this government is concerned in education.

Interjection.

Mrs Pupatello: Oh, indeed, and I do hope that Paul Harris, the principal of Lakeport high school, was not watching while you were giving your rendition today of the Conservative mantra. Let me tell you that I'll look forward to further debate from that side of the House.

Mr Stockwell: First off, I think we should realize that Mr Manners' is not exactly a third-party impartiality that allows us to determine the definitions and the calculations with respect to the funding levels.

I think what we should be talking about here is the speech that was just given by the member for Niagara Falls. I thought it was a good speech. It was enlightening. It was the kind of speech that was meant to be made at this place. I would say to the member for Oakwood, that is the kind of thing we are supposed to do. That's the kind of committee work that we're designed to do. We're supposed to go and talk to our constituents and bring back their messages to this place and use that kind of input to design and change and amend and build legislation. The member for Niagara Falls seems to understand the approach. He has taken it very seriously, very credibly.

Mr Colle: So why don't we have the hearings?

Mr Stockwell: Why does he have hearings? That's what we do. Every day we go home, I can only assume we talk to our constituents. That's a hearing. Maybe if

you spoke with your constituents more often, you'd feel better informed like the member for Niagara Falls.

The people of this province elected a government that was very clear with respect to the decisions and the avenues we were pursuing in education. I continue to hear the barracking about junior kindergarten. We were very clear in the campaign about our commitment to junior kindergarten. We believed it was an optional.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): What commitment? You can't call that a commitment.

Mr Stockwell: Now, listen, I can take a lot of heckling from people about commitments, but I can't take heckling from Liberals about commitments. You make more commitments about everything than any party in the history of this province.

I applaud the member for Niagara Falls: Good speech, well informed, the kind of thing that we want to hear in this place, and I say to him to keep it up.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls has up to two minutes.

Mr Maves: The member for Etobicoke West is actually my father's favourite member, and I think he just reinforced that position. I thank him for his support.

I'd like to address some of the comments made across the way. Money for a casino: We're quite happy to have that kind of investment in our riding and the amount of economic development it'll bring. Anything beyond that would be bonus. We'll have to talk about that.

I don't need to address the consultation and the public hearings, because if the member had been listening, he'd have heard that this minister has spent 25% of his time over the last few months going around the province talking to school boards and teachers and unions. He's done all kinds of consultation, more than anyone could imagine, not to mention the amount of consultation all the members on this side of the House have been doing for the last few months and will continue to do.

I want to tell you that the OSSTF did dispute the ministry's numbers, which are \$1.3 billion in savings, but when you use the OSSTF's calculations you still find that they spend \$1 billion more. The member opposite maybe should call Mr Manners and find out about that situation.

Lastly, I really get a kick out of the members opposite, who in their red book said they were going to balance the budget in four years. But every time we bring forward any kind of a reduction anywhere in the Ontario government, they say it's no good. Well, where, oh where, would they find those savings?

Right now there's \$14 billion spent on elementary and secondary education in this province. If it was \$18 billion and we wanted to move it back to \$14 billion, they'd still complain. They can't have it both ways. They were either going to balance the budget and cut spending or they weren't. Now we're doing it for the preservation of education in this province.

The Speaker: It being after 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 22 April 1996

Lundi 22 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 avril 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ORGAN DONORS

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): April 21 to 27 is Organ Donor Awareness Week. Every year, more than 600 organ transplants are performed in Ontario. However, there are 1,200 patients on Ontario's waiting list. To put this in perspective, 100 out of every million people in this province need an organ transplant, yet only 20 out of every million are likely to become potential organ donors.

MORE, the multiple organ retrieval and exchange program of Ontario, needs your help and the help of all Ontarians. All MPPs should have received an information package from MORE. They would appreciate your sharing this information with your constituents. Everyone can be a potential donor, regardless of age. It is the health of the organ, not the age of the donor that is important.

The new organ donor card will now be included with the Ontario health card. The new Ontario driver's licences do not have room for the donor card. MORE has developed a new donor card which should be placed in your wallet or wherever you keep all your identification.

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have an organization such as MORE. Thanks to the efforts of MORE, Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America to use DNA testing to match kidneys.

Organ donations save lives. MORE asks you to think about being a potential donor. Please discuss this with your family. MORE can be reached at Toronto at 416-921-1130 or at 1-800-263-2833.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I rise to bring to members' attention the display going on in room 163 of the Legislative Building today and tomorrow by the Association of Community Information Centres in Ontario, representing the over 50 community information centres from across the province.

These centres, using a provincial database, Online Ontario, provide information to citizens across the province on such important services as access to appropriate government offices, community services such as child care, language classes, recreational programs and seniors' services. I welcome in the audience today members of the association.

I particularly want to draw to the government's attention the fact that \$1.1 million of funding to the community information centres has been cut, in the

erroneous belief that other provincial funding is forthcoming. I want to point out to the minister, who I'm glad to see is here, that one of the things that makes this particular decision very difficult to understand is that services at the community information centres are provided at a much lower cost than other comparable services in both the government and the private sector; and secondly, that these community information centres rely very heavily on volunteers to provide these much-needed services.

I would encourage the minister, as she follows up on her initiative of last week in providing access to information for vulnerable adults, to consider seriously the community information centres as a vehicle to do that.

EARTH DAY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Today is a very significant day on the environmental advocacy calendar. Today is Earth Day.

Back on April 9, my colleague Frank Klees, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources, announced on behalf of Minister Hodgson and the Minister of Environment and Energy, Brenda Elliott, the start of environmental advocacy weeks. Advocacy weeks are designed to promote public awareness of important environmental issues.

Today, on Earth Day, more than 100 countries are celebrating and marking this, the 25th anniversary of Earth Day. Earth Day's mission is to improve the state of the environment by encouraging individuals and communities to develop effective environmental partnerships and action plans.

On Earth Day and during Earth Week—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired. Would the member take his seat, please. That's the clock working.

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My statement is directed to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission recently announced proposed changes to the distribution of milk in northern Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): We'll let the member finish, and then we'll go back to you again.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Don't take that from the Speaker.

Mr Miclash: These changes would remove all considerations to producing and processing of the dairy industry in northern Ontario. It would allow southern Ontario producers to compete in northern communities.

Northern producers and processors tell me that these changes are being made with little or no public consultation. I am told that if the changes proceed as planned, we can expect plant closures and job losses in northern Ontario.

In my question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines two weeks ago, I asked what interventions he had made to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on behalf of the northern milk industry, along with what assurances he was willing to provide to northern residents that these changes will not result in higher price increases for milk and milk products.

We still have no commitment from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines or from his government that the northern dairy industry and northern municipalities will not lose their plants and somewhere between 250 and 300 jobs in northern communities.

Northern residents do not feel that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines or his government understands their concerns. People tell me as I travel the north that this government, more than any other, is not listening.

Again, I call upon the minister responsible for northern Ontario at the cabinet table to commit to the northern dairy industry and northern consumers that full public hearings will be held before any changes are made to northern milk distribution systems.

1340

EARTH DAY

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Northumberland would like to complete his statement.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do I get the full minute and a half?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr Galt: Today is a significant day on the environmental advocacy calendar. Today is Earth Day.

Back on April 9, my colleague Frank Klees, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources, announced on behalf of Minister Hodgson and the Minister of Environment and Energy, Brenda Elliott, the start of environmental advocacy weeks. Advocacy weeks are designed to promote public awareness of important environmental issues.

Today, Earth Day, more than 100 countries are celebrating and marking this, the 25th anniversary of Earth Day. Earth Day's mission is to improve the state of the environment by encouraging individuals and communities to develop effective partnerships and action plans. On Earth Day and during Earth Week, which runs through Sunday, April 28, Ontarians and all Canadians are invited to reconfirm their well-documented personal commitment to the environment. People across the country and around the world are participating in community events such as tree planting, cleanups, concerts, workshops and parades.

On behalf of this government, which has a stated commitment to ensuring our tax dollars are wisely and effectively used to protect the environment, I invite all members of this House to take part. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all Canadians that it's only through individual actions that our children, our neigh-

bours and our communities will be encouraged to continue to work towards making every day Earth Day.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Today is Earth Day. I can't think of a more appropriate time for a little review of the Harris government's record on protecting our environment. Here are some excerpts from my Earth Day report card on the Harris government, released on Friday. This is, sadly enough, only a partial list.

On water, the Tories get an F for killing plans to prevent and control toxic substances from entering our sewers.

On air quality, they get an F for lifting the ban on new municipal garbage incinerators certain to increase cancer-causing chemicals in our atmosphere.

On green industry and recycling, they get an F for eliminating funding for the popular blue box program, a virtual symbol of our commitment to waste reduction.

On protection of lands and forests, they get—you guessed—another F for passing Bill 20, which will lead to urban sprawl and paving over agricultural land.

Now, the cynical will be saying: "There she goes again. Is there really nothing on which this government can be given a passing grade?" So I took a closer look and, lo and behold, I actually did find one area in which the government was not only passing, but actually excelling: On obfuscation and doublespeak they get an A.

"The ministry will be tough on polluters," crowed the government in a recent document that chopped the ministry staff by almost one third and gutted numerous green programs and regulations. No amount of sugar-coated language can hide the bitter taste of this government's shortsighted, ill-advised and hypocritical actions on the environment.

ORGAN DONORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I rise today, along with the member for Oriole, to recognize Organ Donor Awareness Week. This very worthwhile activity is promoted by the multiple organ retrieval and exchange program of Ontario, MORE.

It has been estimated that if organ donors were increased by 10%, the health care budget would save \$12 million over a decade.

Public awareness of the need for donated organs is critical. The success of transplants is apparent, as shown by the increase of organ donations in Ontario over the last year. However, the public needs to know more about organ transplants. A signed donor card has no effect on treatment in the hospital, and perceived religious or cultural restrictions may not apply, as the objective of health care is to save lives.

Many families approached about donation of the organs of their loved ones refuse. Many are reluctant to say yes because they are fearful of the process. They are worried about how donations could affect their loved ones. I must stress that even if there is a signed donor card, the person's final wishes can still be overruled by family members.

A son of one of my staff members has been waiting since 1994 for a transplant, the gift of life, the donation of an organ.

With a transplant a recipient is able to live a full and happy, productive life contributing to their family and community. Families who agree to donate organs report they have received something very special in return. Furthermore, the altruistic act has helped many—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRES

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): Today I would like to welcome Janet St Pierre from the Belle River Community Council, an information centre in my riding. Janet is in the gallery. Ms St Pierre is here with the Association of Community Information Centres in Ontario.

Funding for community information centres has been decimated by this government. These centres provide a valuable, cost-effective service to individuals and businesses in communities across the country who may require the system as well as the free advocacy and referral service for citizens. These services would have to be provided by other agencies at a much higher cost. An example of this is the Ministry of Health's hotline which costs \$132 per contact hour to answer questions from citizens. In comparison, community information centres provide this service for a mere \$23.73 per contact hour. This equals a great savings for the taxpayer and a more efficient service for the citizens.

The association has set up a fully functional information centre in the building here today and tomorrow to show their membership's expertise. I urge all members to stop by room 163 of the main building to get a demonstration of their capabilities and services and to get firsthand information from the providers of this valuable service.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Last week the Minister of Natural Resources admitted that over 2,000 people in MNR will be out of a job. He tried to tell this Legislature that the impacts on MNR and communities in northern Ontario would not be significant. The facts tell quite another story.

First, there is the issue of fighting forest fires. Not only is the MNR losing attack fire crews and bases in places like Atikokan and Ignace, it will also lose the important backup fire support that is needed. The fact is that virtually every northern Ontario employee of MNR is experienced in firefighting and firefighting support and they are the people who become the fire crews and the fire crew support when serious forest fires occur, but they won't be there any more. MNR won't have the same capacity to fight forest fires that it has had in the past.

Then we have the shutdown of provincial parks. In my part of the province, over 1.2 million people come from the United States and Manitoba each year for the tourism experience and many of them stay in our provincial parks. But this year two of the most popular provincial parks, Lake of the Woods Provincial Park and Caliper

Lake Provincial Park will be shut down. Gone are permanent jobs, student summer jobs and an important part of the local economy.

Then we have the forests. This government will turn over control of eight million hectares of crown forest to the private sector—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

TORNADOES

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): My statement today deals with the devastating tornado that ripped through the ridings of Dufferin-Peel, Grey and Wellington counties.

As you know, this past weekend our community was once again torn apart by a tornado that touched down in Shelburne, Violet Hill, Grand Valley, the townships of Arthur, Peel and West Luther in Wellington county and Williamsford in Grey county.

The community of Violet Hill was most affected, with a rural subdivision experiencing the bulk of the damage. When I visited the area Sunday, I was amazed at how much damage had occurred. Garages were torn from homes, roofs and walls were torn apart and trees were scattered like matchsticks. It was a miracle that injuries weren't more severe than broken bones and bruises.

Most homeowners had no opportunity to escape the tornado's path. It was most gratifying for me to see how the community responded. When I visited Violet Hill, I was encouraged to see how quickly the community had come to the assistance of their neighbours in need.

By Sunday afternoon, much of the damage had been cleaned up by friends and neighbours. Sunday morning, the local Rotary Clubs and the Home Builders' Association were all organizing volunteers to assist with cleanup and clearing the area.

It is amazing to see neighbours and friends pull together to work so quickly to assist their neighbours in need. I would like to offer my condolences to the homeowners who will now spend the next six months rebuilding their homes and putting their lives back together. I would like to offer my thanks to the many individuals who assisted with the cleanup over the weekend. I was reminded once again this weekend how special our communities are when they respond to neighbours and friends in need.

1350

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Today we have Chris Hornby and his family with us. Chris Hornby is a former Easter Seal Timmy and is from Essex county. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Please join me, members, in welcoming the fourth group of pages to serve the 36th Parliament of Ontario: Shawn Bender, Guelph; Stacey Coleman, Chatham-Kent; Marlo DesJardins, Simcoe Centre; David Forestell, Wellington; Sheranda Fox, Northumberland; Lucas Gindin, Dover-

court; Sarah Griffiths, Oakville South; Bradley Hammond, St Catharines-Brock; Brendon Hawkeswood, Windsor-Sandwich; Heather Husch, Lake Nipigon; Brent Kenworthy, York-Mackenzie; Jessie Klassen, Sudbury East; Shannon Kohlmeier, London South; Catherine Kunz, Oriole; Jennifer Lim, Carleton; Laura MacNiven, London North; Hélène Mateev, Scarborough West; Vik Mohindra, Durham West; Dennis Nezc, Etobicoke-Lakeshore; Bryan Oehm, Middlesex; Charlene Perry, Quinte; Melissa Savage, Cochrane North; Keith Seim, Mississauga West; Tyler-Blair Sheppard, Norfolk; David Simard, Downsview; Maxwell Wellington, Ottawa-Rideau. Welcome to our pages.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): On Wednesday, April 17, 1996, the member for Dovercourt (Mr Silipo) rose on a point of order respecting the use of question period by ministers to make statements.

The member is quite correct when he asserts that "question period should not be used as the place in which ministers make statements about government policy." I am in full agreement and would caution ministers that a statement of government policy, of which the House should be informed, should be announced during statements by the ministry and not during question period.

However, as Speaker Warner states in his ruling of October 9, 1991:

"That is not to say that the Speaker is in a position to make judgements on the contents of answers in order to determine whether or not they constitute announcements of public policy."

In conclusion, I wish to thank the member for Dovercourt (Mr Silipo) for bringing this matter to the attention of the House and to repeat that question period is not the appropriate time for ministers to make statements that should be made during the proceeding reserved for that purpose.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I would like to advise the Legislature on action being taken to complete repairs to a backup system at Pickering Nuclear Generating Station. The need was identified during routine operational maintenance.

As the honourable members know, employee and public safety are the first priorities of Ontario Hydro and this government.

In accordance with these principles, on Saturday, Ontario Hydro began shutting down the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station so that repairs could be made to a check valve on the emergency coolant injection system.

The federal regulator, the Atomic Energy Control Board, was informed of the situation. On-site AECB representatives have worked with station staff to ensure the shutdown meets board approval. They support the remedial action being undertaken.

The backup system was not at any time in jeopardy. There are in fact two check valves in the system that ensure appropriate backup. Only one is required to keep the system operational in the event of a loss of coolant. While one requires repair, the other is operating properly.

The faulty valve was discovered as part of a routine testing of the safety systems. The emergency coolant injection system serves all eight Pickering units. All units must therefore be shut down to make the repair.

Ontario Hydro informs me that there is no risk of the same flaw at other nuclear generating stations. The failure at Pickering was caused by valve components not present at Bruce and Darlington.

This shutdown is not related to the April 15 release of tritiated water.

We expect to see the repair completed and the station back in service within eight to 10 days. There will be no impact on power supply to customers in the province. Ontario Hydro will replace Pickering generation with supply from fossil operations and, if necessary, through electricity purchases.

The government continues to be committed to the five-year average rate freeze for Ontario taxpayers. The shutdown of Pickering does not put the rate freeze in jeopardy.

Again, I want to assure the Legislature that this is part of routine inspection and maintenance and that the system was at all times fully protected.

TORNADOES

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to inform the House of the aftermath of the two tornadoes which touched down in southwestern Ontario on Saturday evening. Let me begin by expressing our concern and sympathy to all of those whose lives have been affected by the destruction. There were a number of injuries and there has been some serious damage to personal property in the area. But most important of all, thank goodness, there was no loss of life, and for that stroke of luck we are all very grateful. I am pleased to report that emergency personnel have assisted all residents who suffered injuries or damage to their property.

The first tornado touched down in Grey county about 6:25 pm on Saturday. Five minutes later, a second tornado touched down in various parts of Wellington and Dufferin counties. Some 54 homes and 26 farm buildings were damaged or destroyed. Debris was scattered over a very wide area.

Staff of my ministry contacted local civic, police and fire officials immediately following the tornadoes and we have continued to work with local officials to assist them in their response to tornado damage. On Sunday, staff of my ministry met in the township of Arthur with the reeves of Arthur, West Luther and Peel townships. Staff also met with my colleague the member for Wellington. Let me say that the local members for Dufferin-Peel, Wellington and Owen Sound have been in their communities showing their support and assisting victims of this terrible tragedy.

The Premier has asked the Solicitor General to visit these communities this afternoon. In the meantime, I would like to congratulate the Ontario Provincial Police, the local fire chiefs and local municipal officials. Their efforts have been truly outstanding. I cannot say enough about the work of the local community organizations that came forward to offer their assistance, food, shelter and comfort—neighbour helping neighbour, friend helping friend. They represent the very best of our province.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I want to respond to the statement made in this House by the Minister of Environment and Energy. Your continued attempts to provide a placebo of reassurance in the face of repeated evidence that there is reason to be concerned is simply not adequate. It is particularly not adequate on this issue in these circumstances, when the problem has been created by a valve problem at the Pickering nuclear station.

You have said that this was part of a routine inspection. This was in fact an unscheduled shutdown in the plant in which there have been valve problems known for some years. If I am not mistaken, this is the plant in which there was a replacement valve program undertaken some years ago because of the very real concerns with the valves in the Pickering nuclear station.

Rather than offer us a reassurance when we have yet another valve problem at Pickering, you should be prepared to bring to this Legislature and make public a full report on the status of that replacement and repair program as it relates to the Pickering nuclear station. We need to know whether or not that program of replacement has been completed. We need to know, if it has been completed, why there are now problems with the valves at this particular station. We need to know most particularly—and this is why I am very concerned about this issue today—whether cutbacks in Ontario Hydro have indeed jeopardized both the replacement program and the ongoing maintenance at our nuclear plants and therefore have jeopardized the public's safety.

We need that full report and we need it because, if my memory again is not mistaken, I believe there were questions asked of you earlier about a peer review of the safety of nuclear facilities in the province of Ontario and you were less than forthcoming about that review. If you want to reassure people in this province that our nuclear stations are safe, you must be prepared to provide not just placebo reassurances but a full report on the replacement program and the ongoing maintenance of those facilities, particularly the Pickering facility.

1400

I have a concern that I raise because I noticed that, somewhat strangely in my mind, you put in your release, a release which was intended to reassure the public about safety given this occurrence, that you're still committed to the five-year average rate freeze at Ontario Hydro. You were asked about your rate freeze last week as Ontario Hydro seeks a rate increase. You know full well you cannot control the hydro rates, but you can indeed as a government put a great deal on pressure on Ontario

Hydro. I want to know whether or not that pressure, that political intervention in the rate-setting program of Ontario Hydro, has jeopardized the maintenance and therefore the safety programs of Ontario Hydro and the safety of Ontario citizens.

Beyond that, the reason why you must be more forthcoming, you must be more open with the people of this province about the safety responsibilities you're prepared to accept as Minister of Energy in this province, is because of your government's direction on the privatization of Ontario Hydro. The fact that we have had several incidents now in which you have to reassure the House about safety makes me raise the question of what kind of reassurance any government can provide the public if it privatizes and sells off our nuclear generation facilities in this province.

You have to realize that this is not just a question, as you look to privatize, about who's going to pay the insurance liability for nuclear plants, which is considerable; this is a question about who is going to ensure that there is not, and never will be, a risk to the public safety. Elected members of the government, and only elected members of the government, can and must be held accountable for the safety of Ontario citizens. It is a matter of public safety and not just the financial bottom line you should be concerned about today.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Just this past Thursday, I questioned the Minister of Labour about closing the radiological lab, and this just confirms the need for maintaining that facility as part of the government of Ontario. That decision in and of itself was not a good decision.

As far as the peer review goes, the Minister of Environment will have a copy of that peer review. We already think we know what's in it. This issue won't go away. You can't cut protection, you can't do the kinds of things you're doing and just think issues of this nature will go away. It's too important for the people of Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Obviously there is a problem with nuclear safety in this province and, in particular, with this plant. There have been several occasions over the past years where there have been problems with various components of the plant. It's no good for the minister to stand up and say, "Don't worry, everybody, everything is fine." Just last week, 1,000 kilograms of tritiated water leaked into Lake Ontario. Today, just a short few days later, we hear about a safety problem with the reactors at Pickering once again. Residents around Pickering are concerned, and they have a right to be concerned.

I'm pleased that the problem that resulted in the shutdown has been found before it's too late. However, I am told that this flaw will cost taxpayers \$1.2 million a day to purchase other power. The minister did not come clean about that today.

I have some real concerns relating to Hydro's reporting of events, and I raised it last week in the House. It took over 12 hours for Hydro to report the tritium spill to the water intake plant. Twelve hours is unacceptable. The minister's response to my question was unacceptable. There was a breakdown in procedure; that is very clear.

Despite what the minister said in the House last week, the Emergency Measures Organization was not the first organization called. In fact, EMO, according to my information, was one of the last organizations which was notified about the spill. I'd like to know what is going on here.

In view of the fact that Hydro's initial modelling indicated that the spill could have been significant, it originally thought from the first readings, the first modellings, that the spill might be of 30,000 becquerels a litre, which would have been terribly significant, and it took 12 hours to report it.

Minister, you do have a responsibility for Ontario Hydro and you also have a responsibility for environmental protection. There was a breakdown, and you need to take action. If it's this hard to get information from a public utility, I can only imagine—in fact, I shudder to think—how difficult it would be to get information from a privatized Ontario Hydro.

I would like this minister to stand on her feet, not hide behind the Donald MacDonald commission, and assure the people of Ontario that nuclear plants in particular, let alone the rest of Ontario Hydro, will not be sold off to the highest bidder. It is the minister's responsibility to tell the people of Ontario just what she plans to do.

TORNADOES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I stand here with the minister today and congratulate local authorities and ministry staff who responded to the tornadoes that hit central Ontario yesterday.

Just briefly to the minister regarding the statement, I think what we're looking for in those communities is a little bit more than sympathy. Given time, I'm sure the minister is going to take a look at what role the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing—or possibly other ministries are able to assist those municipalities that have been affected. I know the people in those communities are looking for more than just sympathy, and I'm sure if the minister had had more time to have a statement, he would have touched on those issues of how directly and how concretely the government wants to respond to what happened yesterday in central Ontario.

I just want to remind the minister that one of the people from that community wonders and asks me how it is that we're able to respond, when in the government's business plan a week and a half ago the ministry cut or eliminated all of the special assistance funding to municipalities. They're looking to you for some leadership and saying: "Where's the beef? We appreciate the sympathy and we appreciate the phone call."

They certainly appreciate the meeting with your ministry officials and the role local members are playing in this, but they want to say to the government, "Listen, now that we've gone through this particular process, we've got to get down to the issue of how we are going to pay for some of that damage in those cases where insurance is not available to either the municipality or local ratepayers." What can the government do to assist those particular individuals and municipalities to deal with the damage that has been done in those communities?

I'm sure, as I said, that the minister in due time will respond to that, and I'm sure the minister will do all he can to financially assist those municipalities in responding to the tragedy yesterday.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PREMIER'S RIDING ASSOCIATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. Last week, the Premier's personal integrity was called into question as Ontarians got a closehand look at some rather disturbing things.

First, we saw the Harris hypocrisy, the man who has been telling seniors and students and the poor of this province to make do with less while he has been accepting an annual gift of a free membership in a golf club. Secondly, we saw the Harris evasiveness: the Premier, and the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet as his spokesman last Thursday, refusing to acknowledge that this gift was subsidized by taxpayers' funds, which clearly it was. Thirdly, we saw the issue of the breach of the Members' Integrity Act, which is indeed a law of this province, and that's what I want to ask the Premier about today.

Last week, before the Premier went into hiding, he told this House that his rule for personal expenses was the following: "...be up front about it, be public about it, put the expenses there and be prepared to answer for them."

Premier, I place to you the same question that I placed in the House on Thursday: Can you today tell me why you did not disclose to the Integrity Commissioner that the Conservative donors were buying you a free golf and country club membership, and can you tell me why you did not disclose this, when clearly the integrity act required you to do so?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I obviously disagree with virtually 100% of the premise of the member's question, but let me get right to the answer. There is no conflict of interest in any of my dealings with the riding association. I have checked this with the riding association; I have also had discussions with the conflict commissioner, who concurs with me that there is no obligation under any information I have given him, the riding has given him, anything that you have given him or anything he's read in the paper that would cause any disclosure to be made to the conflict commissioner. That was my discussion with him.

Mrs McLeod: I would be very interested in knowing that the Premier has, since last Thursday, made a disclosure to the Integrity Commissioner. I would be very interested in a written ruling from the Integrity Commissioner as to what does constitute gifts and whether or not a gift that is subsidized by taxpayers' dollars from a riding association is in fact not considered a gift, because I think that is important.

1410

Premier, we placed a question last Thursday because the act to us seems quite clear, and that was, "A member of the assembly shall not accept a fee, gift or personal benefit that is connected directly or indirectly with the performance of his or her duties in office."

Premier, you will recall that last Wednesday you told us that the purchase of the golf membership was directly related to your being the MPP for Nipissing. It is also given that it cannot in any way be considered a legitimate business expense, which is why it clearly seemed to be a gift. The Integrity Commissioner has indeed ruled that this is not a gift, and I ask you to explain the basis for his ruling to the House today so we may all be aware.

Hon Mr Harris: The member is perfectly free to reference any of their own personal information or request any information from the Integrity Commissioner about anybody else. Nobody in this Legislature has done so, as of today, to the best of my knowledge, and I suspect that's because, as I've checked over the filings, I've seen no declaration of any gift from any member of the Legislature or any leader to deal with campaigns, to deal with clothing, to deal with cleaning, to deal with hairdos, to deal with anything that has been made by anybody there.

Quite frankly, I did not disclose anything to the conflict commissioner, as the member has indicated. I confirmed with the conflict commissioner everything that I had done, all the expenses that I had been legitimately reimbursed for by my riding association, carrying out my function as leader of the party, as the MPP. I disclosed that and discussed that with the conflict commissioner because you seem to have wanted to raise it up and cause questions in the media. In the absence of your referring it, I asked him and he said, "I see no difficulty."

Mrs McLeod: We raise it because it seems quite clear to us that anything which constitutes a gift and which is of a value over \$200 must be disclosed and would be disclosed on any member submitting a statement to the Integrity Commissioner.

Given our understanding of that, Premier, may I ascertain today that you are not at all uncomfortable with us in fact seeking written clarification on this matter from the Integrity Commissioner and making that clarification public?

Hon Mr Harris: Frankly, it doesn't matter whether I'm uncomfortable or not. It's certainly your right to do so.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Our second question is to the Minister of Education. This concerns an event that is somewhat different but still rather extraordinary because it appears that a member of the Conservative government has been caught telling the truth, such an event that it made front-page news in Belleville this weekend.

Of course I'm referring to the story in the *Intelligencer* with the headline that says "Tories Lied, Says Rollins." The member for Quinte met last Friday with about 250 high school students, teachers and public school board administrators to discuss the harmful impact of this government's cutbacks on classroom education, and the member for Quinte told it like it is, like every one of us who was out in our ridings understands this.

He said, "There is no question about it, there is going to be an effect in the classroom." According to the report

in the *Belleville Intelligencer*, a student then asked the member for Quinte if he meant this government lied when it said it wouldn't affect the classroom and the member for Quinte replied, "Yup, on that part it did. Yes."

My question to the minister is, is the member for Quinte telling the truth?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The Leader of the Opposition should know and understand that it is not unusual for this government to tell the truth to the people of Ontario, and I can tell her this, that on the education ministry, we have kept the promises that we made in the Common Sense Revolution. We kept the promises that we made a year before the previous election.

We have restored junior kindergarten to a local option. The local board can decide what services can be delivered to the local community. We have kept our commitment in finding the savings in our education system that our taxpayers depend on. We have kept those commitments, not only other portfolios of this government but also in the Ministry of Education, and I'm proud of keeping those promises.

Mrs McLeod: The member for Quinte obviously knew what was happening in his riding and told the truth about it. The Minister of Education is either not aware of the reality of what is happening in Hastings and in every other board across this province or he is unwilling to state the facts publicly to the Legislature as they actually are.

One fact alone from your response, Minister: You haven't just made junior kindergarten optional; you have cut the funding and you are killing junior kindergarten. That's the reality of what you've done.

You have cut the funds to school boards to such an extent that they do have to cut into classroom education. Just for the record, in the particular boards the member for Quinte represents, the public board spends 88% of its education dollars on something your ministry calls instruction, and the separate board in that area spend 85% on what the ministry calls instruction. When you cut them, you are cutting classroom education.

That's not the only area, Minister. The truth-telling on the part of the government backbenchers appears to have been contagious over the weekend because the member from Grey has caught the bug. Here's what the member from Grey said on his local radio station last week during a discussion about the Conservative education cuts. The member from Grey said: "I do believe our Ministry of Education is a little out of control," and, "I think our minister really doesn't know what he's doing—at times it seems that way." I'm still quoting the member, "I think he mentioned he wanted to create a crisis—it looks like he's done that."

In a courageous example of truth-telling that should be emulated by all members of his government, the member from Grey said he thinks the minister is a "little out of whack right now." Minister, is the member from Grey also telling the truth?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for this question, this opportunity to respond

in the House. Perhaps it seems to the Leader of the Opposition unreasonable, perhaps it seems unreasonable to the member, to ask our partners in the school system, the people, the boards, the federations—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Welland-Thorold.

Hon Mr Snobelen: —to find less than 2% savings—less than 2%—in a system where an independent commission found that 47% of our expenditures were outside the classroom, but I can tell you that for the people of Ontario, the people who have made the adjustments over the last decade in their families as their disposable income declined more than 2%, the people who have found this in their business lives and in their professional lives, it comes as no shock that those kinds of reductions can be made, and can be made without affecting classroom education. I'm surprised that question would come up.

Mrs McLeod: There is simply no fact in what the minister says. In the Bruce-Grey area, 88% of the education dollars are spent on what the ministry calls instruction. Minister, I think you should sit closer to the member from Quinte and the member from Grey, because you might catch the truth-telling bug that's going around.

The reality, as so eloquently put by the two government backbenchers, is that this minister has broken a key government commitment. The cuts imposed by this minister, with the full backing of this Premier, are hurting classroom education; they are hurting the children in our classrooms. Minister, will you not admit that your cuts are hurting children and will you admit this is just another example of a broken Conservative commitment?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I think the Leader of the Opposition will not be surprised when I take exception to the premise of the question. There is absolutely no reason why the quality of the education in this province cannot be enhanced—and by that I mean student achievement in the classroom—while we find savings in that system that are so important. There is no reason why that cannot be found.

1420

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. I want to give him an opportunity to continue explaining his crisis in education. I noted that in that last cheering section, neither the member for Owen Sound nor the member for Quinte was cheering.

I want to bring the minister back to reality, because the reality we're seeing across the province is that, unlike what the minister has been talking about here and throughout the province, that his cuts will not affect classroom education, we are seeing instance after instance of cuts directly to education.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the House come to order, please. The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr Silipo: We are seeing instance after instance where the cuts are affecting very directly classroom education. Last week we saw in Oxford county at Norwich high school over 200 students walking out of class to support their teachers who got laid off; a similar action in the

Niagara South Board of Education; similar actions in London. I could list on and on many examples.

The point I want to raise with the minister is this: Now it seems that even some of his backbench members and colleagues are tuning in to the fact that his cuts are hurting classroom education. If he can't even convince his own colleagues that his policies are not hurting classroom education, how does he expect to convince anyone else in the province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to reassure the member opposite that our caucus, this government, to a person is committed to doing a variety of things. We are solidly in alignment with these, and if you'll pay attention, I'll let you know what they are.

One, we are going to return some fiscal management to this province so that we can hand a province with some opportunity, possibility and vitality on to the next generation, something your government failed to do, sir.

Secondly, we are committed and we are in alignment for providing quality of education, and by that we mean an improvement in the results of our students here in the province, and we will achieve that, sir.

You may be a tad surprised at a government in which the caucus means something, at a government in which the cabinet listens to the caucus, in which people have something to contribute. Many of the people in this caucus have an extensive experience in our school system, and I can tell you that they are quite an asset to this government, to me personally. You may also not be familiar with the words of Will Rogers when he said, "When two people agree on everything, only one person's thinking." Maybe there's only one person thinking—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold has been continuously out of order and I won't warn him again.

Mr Silipo: Minister, you can continue to go on and on about your crisis in education, but the reality is that your cuts are hurting children in the classroom. Parents know that, students know that, teachers know that, and now even some of your government member colleagues know that.

The member for Grey-Owen Sound, as has already been quoted, said recently over the weekend, "I think our minister really doesn't know what he's doing—at times it seems that way. I think he mentioned he wanted to create a crisis—it looks like he's done that." Minister, what do you say to the member for Grey-Owen Sound in terms of his assessment of your performance and your actions?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I have spoken to the member this morning and I will continue to talk with the member about issues of concern in his riding and his area, issues of concern to the school boards he represents. I can tell you that we intend to have an ongoing conversation about that and about how education is affected in his local area.

However, this may come as a surprise to some of the members opposite, but we in this government believe that we can enhance student achievement in this province and find savings. That may come as a surprise to the members opposite, but that in fact is what this government is committed to doing.

Mr Silipo: I'm not going to debate the minister on that point, because his own members are doing a good job of it. Let me just say that I agree very much with the member for Quinte when he says, "The provincial government lied when it told Ontarians provincial funding cuts to education wouldn't show up in the classroom."

I ask the minister, who's right? If the member for Quinte believes that strongly what he said to the newspapers on the weekend, he's saying a lot about you and about your government and your actions. He's recognizing that the cuts are hurting classroom education. Why won't you finally recognize that and at the very least put a freeze on the cuts until you get a realistic assessment of the damage you're causing out there?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can assure the member opposite that we can find savings in our education system without affecting classroom education. Which of the studies would you like me to quote? There are several, sir. Independent people who have reviewed this system found 47% of our expenditures are out of the classroom and suggested a reduction down to 40%, about \$1 billion. When you talk about student-teacher ratios, we're interested as a party in making sure we have our people in the education system utilized so they make the biggest effect on student achievement, and we think that's what needs to be done in education. Let me just say this very clearly: I believe and this government believes we can find savings in this system and enhance student achievement.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Nobody voted for \$1 billion to be taken out of education in one year.

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Minister of Environment and Energy in relation to the statement she made earlier today regarding the shutdown at Pickering and in relation also to last week's tritium incident.

Since about 20% of Ontario's electrical generating capacity has been shut down due to the problem in the emergency coolant backup system and, particularly as it's Earth Day, Ontarians want to be assured that the system is safe, will the minister agree that Hydro, which had a peer review audit done on its nuclear facilities last fall and has refused to provide that to the public or to the media—will the minister direct Ontario Hydro to release the peer review audit so the Ontario public will know the full picture concerning safety at Ontario Hydro's nuclear facilities?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I would like to emphasize the fact that this faulty valve was discovered as a result of careful monitoring by Ontario Hydro in routine inspection, and I think Ontario Hydro should be congratulated for taking strong and immediate action to prevent anything from occurring at Pickering. Strong action at Pickering is important, and certainly important to the people who live in that vicinity and are concerned about their safety, as we all are.

The peer review documents are internal documents. They only work when they are internal documents. Their purpose is frank and open disclosure among peers in an

effort to find best solutions for operational procedures. They only work when they are internal.

Mr Wildman: The public has a right to know the information about Ontario Hydro's safety, particularly the safety at the nuclear plants. The peer review audit is a performance and safety review of those plants, and the minister and Hydro are refusing to release it. The Globe and Mail made a request and it was turned down "because release of the reports could generate unjustified negative opinion that would affect the economic interests of Ontario Hydro."

1430

What have you got to hide? Why won't you come clean? Why won't you at least, now that you've seen these incidents in the last couple of weeks, direct Ontario Hydro to release the peer review audit?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Neither the Atomic Energy Control Board nor the government have copies of these documents. They are intended to be effective as review documents shared among peers, the purpose being a full and open disclosure to find the best solutions. In fact the Atomic Energy Control Board, which is the regulator responsible for the safety of the nuclear facilities, does not want disclosure because it knows it would inhibit the efficacy of such a process.

Mr Wildman: In the November 28, 1995, edition of the Globe and Mail an official of the AECB said he doubts the information reviews would cause embarrassment to Ontario Hydro. The minister says that the government does not have the audit. My question was whether the minister would direct Ontario Hydro to release it, not whether the minister would release it.

Particularly at a time when the government is considering the privatization of Ontario Hydro, is the minister aware that in the Wall Street Journal on February 1 there was a report that utilities in the northeastern United States are cutting corners on safety as they attempt to reduce costs? Obviously, the people of Ontario have a right to know what's happening now in Ontario Hydro and what might be the result of any attempt to privatize that operation.

In light of these reports, are you prepared to release the peer review and assure Ontarians that responsibility for the operation and safety at Ontario Hydro remains in the public sector?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I remind my colleagues that the shutdown at Pickering is in response to a faulty valve in a backup safety system. Again, these peer reviews only work when the disclosure is full and open among peers and that is solely its intent. The AECB does not believe that these peer reviews would be effective if they are made public. My job is to make sure Ontario Hydro can do its best to provide safe nuclear power for this province, and I believe that in the present system they can do that best.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I have another question for the Minister of Education. It relates very directly, Minister, to the cuts you have imposed on school boards across the province, cuts which are not the \$400 million you like to talk about, but have an impact

of at least \$1 billion on public boards alone. Boards cannot implement those cuts without hurting classroom education.

You have said today that you do listen to members of your caucus, so that leads me to a question about exactly who has your ear. The Haliburton County Board of Education, we understand, is to be cut by \$1 million, obviously a concern. We learned over the weekend that the size of that original cut has been reduced by about two thirds. One media report attributes this rather significant change to a little political magic by the member for Victoria-Haliburton, who of course also sits at the cabinet table with you as Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development.

Minister, was indeed the original cut proposed for the Haliburton board of education reduced? If so, did you have any discussions with the Minister of Natural Resources about this change in direction, and is this the type of deal that you work out on a regular basis?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): To the Leader of the Opposition, first of all, you're quite correct. Our reduction to the school boards was not, as announced, \$400 million; in fact that would have been a very, we think, tough operating reduction to make, so we mitigated that \$400 million with a temporary moratorium on capital spending, which will actually reduce the operational reductions that school boards need to make over the next year. We have done that, conscious of the fact that school boards need time to make the adjustments in order to pick up those savings.

As far as the other suggestion that the leader has made of some sort of—I don't know—deal, can I just assure the Speaker and assure the chamber that once again the Leader of the Opposition is simply misinformed.

Mrs McLeod: The minister has not mitigated the cuts to education as it relates the \$1-billion impact, unless he has to the Haliburton board of education. I ask you to provide us with correct information if the media reports were misinformed.

I can't believe that you did not come into the Legislature today having asked for some accurate information so that misunderstanding could be corrected, so I ask you again: Did you mitigate the cuts specifically for the Haliburton Board of Education? If you did, what was the basis for reducing their cut in grants? If it is found to be a perfectly normal procedure in the Ministry of Education and Training, could you name any other school boards which have been able to cut a similar deal, or else tell us unequivocally today that no other school board has cut such a deal?

Hon Mr Snobelen: To help the Leader of the Opposition understand, let me say very simply that no such deal exists.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Was the Minister of Natural Resources not telling the truth, then, in the report in the newspaper?

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training. As the minister is

aware, the committee has been hearing presentations, and will continue to hear presentations this week, on Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, and has heard a number of proposals from boards, teachers and other interested groups about possible amendments.

Since we're continuing the hearings this week and it wouldn't make sense not to know what the government is proposing—government members have indicated there may be government amendments—is the minister prepared to indicate to the committee that the government will table the amendments the ministry intends to propose to Bill 31 at the beginning of the session this week so that everyone will know what the government's intentions are?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): In reply to the leader of the third party, no, we have no intention of tabling amendments at the start of this week. What we will do is get the public input that this process is designed to have, and at the conclusion of that we'll see if there's some way this bill can be improved or that the College of Teachers can be improved.

Mr Wildman: From that, am I to understand that at this point the minister has no amendments to the legislation in mind? If that is the case, does that mean that the government only intends to begin to prepare any amendments it might consider after Thursday's session this week? If that is not the case, why would the government not now table the amendments so we don't have presentations all week dealing with areas that the government has already determined to change?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'll say this as clearly as I can, so that there can be some great understanding about this. You have asked if I was going to table amendments today, at the start of the process this week, and I have said that no, I have no intention of doing that. We'll wait until the public input is in and then we will have a look at the full body of public opinion, the full body of presentations that have been brought before the committee, and we'll see if there is any way to improve the College of Teachers so that at the end of the Legislative process we have the best college possible.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week, more than 250 people in my community attended a town hall meeting that I organized to deal with the very difficult and tough issue of drunk driving in our community.

Could the minister tell this House what he and his ministry are doing to combat what is very criminal behaviour, drunk driving in the province of Ontario?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank the member for Nepean for his question and also for his dedication to road safety.

This government is committed to ensuring the safety of our road users across the province, and we have done more than previous governments in the past. Tough measures to reduce the incidence of drunk driving were introduced as part of our road safety program in October 1995. They include \$1.2 million of continued annual funding to RIDE programs run by municipal police services; a commitment to work with the private sector to

create local and provincial year-round public awareness campaigns.

On top of that, legislation will be introduced to increase the potential maximum suspension period for a convicted first-time offender from 12 months to 18 months to allow the courts more room to make the punishment fit the crime. Legislation will also be introduced to provide for immediate 90-day administrative licence suspensions.

1440

Mr Baird: At our town hall meeting, we heard from numerous people who were very concerned about this issue. Many of them had family members involved in very serious accidents. We heard that the time for education has passed. We've done enough of what we can do from education; people want tough enforcement and they want tougher action to combat drunk driving on our roads.

Members in my riding were pleased to learn of the doubling of the funding to 119 communities in the RIDE program. Even the police chief in our community spoke out in favour of that.

Members in my riding want tougher measures to combat drunk driving. One of the measures available is administrative licence suspension, something that you mentioned. My constituents welcomed this government announcement of ALS last fall as a positive step in the right direction.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): How did they welcome the cancellation of the ads?

Mr Baird: We had 250 people at the meeting; not one of them mentioned the ads.

When ALS was announced last fall, we were told it would be up and running within 12 months. Could the minister tell us whether or not we can meet that deadline, and if so, when can we expect to see this program operational on the roadways of Ontario?

Hon Mr Palladini: I would like to assure the House and the people of Ontario that this government is working to meet its deadline for the introduction of ALS. This initiative has a proven track record in other jurisdictions of reducing alcohol-related crashes, deaths and injuries by up to 50%. We will be introducing legislation this spring, and implementation is planned for the fall.

Administrative licence suspension, when combined with the other measures contained in the road safety plan, will mean safer roads for the people of Nepean and the rest of Ontario. These and other changes we are considering will make us one of the toughest jurisdictions in North America on drunk driving.

JOB SECURITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Minister, when your government was elected, and before that during the election campaign, it was suggested that once you were elected there would be several industries coming to Ontario and then everybody would want to stay in Ontario.

In St Catharines, since you've been elected I can think of seven or eight plants that have been affected by closures: Kelsey-Hayes, 135 people; Court Industries, 20

people; Thona Corp, 60 people; Foster Wheeler, 188; Beaver Lumber, 59; Mott's Cadbury and Schweppes operations, Cadbury Beverages, 175 last Thursday; and today I pick up the local newspaper and I find another 100 jobs are lost in St Catharines, this time at ITT Automotive.

Minister, what could you believe could be the reasons for all these companies leaving, and what are you prepared to do to retain these jobs in the province of Ontario, because they're so very important to the people in our community?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'm very pleased to respond to the member for St Catharines. We are very concerned when jobs move on or changes occur in industry. As you are quite aware, at the present time the Globe and Mail is running a very good series of articles on the job market and what is happening. There are changes in the job market, there always will be and there have been in the past.

We are not concerned, because we know that we are creating the right business climate. Let me give you a few examples of this. Hoechst chemicals in Kingston, near the old Celanese Canada Inc plant, has put \$200 million into their plant for expansion purposes. Siemens, a well-known, worldwide respected company, is doubling its investment in the Windsor region by about \$100 million to \$200 million. All I can say is that those are very gratifying statistics and I think they ensure us in Ontario that we are creating the right business climate.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: I find it amazing that so many Conservative members are applauding when so many people in St Catharines have lost their jobs in the last period of time.

I want, however, to zero in on one specific closing to see if the minister can be of some assistance in this regard, and that is the Cadbury Beverages closing last Thursday. The Minister of Agriculture will be interested in this: 175 people will lose their jobs, and all of these people are extremely concerned, justifiably, when they lose their jobs. But as a result of the closing of that plant, grape growers in the Niagara region will not have a place to have their grapes processed for the purpose of grape juice.

The minister has had the weekend and he's had input from the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Could he tell us what action the government is prepared to take to ensure that those growers have an opportunity to have their juice processed here in Ontario and therefore continue the economic viability of that form of agriculture in the Niagara Peninsula instead of paving it over from Toronto to Fort Erie?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm very pleased to report that as in all cases where we see changes in a community about jobs, we are working with the company. We are in contact with the companies at all times to find out how we may assist them. That's part of our job in our ministry and our government. Just as we were helpful to Toyota and Honda in helping them expand their plants, we will be working with this company and that region in Niagara to make sure the grape manufacturers—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. I've been very patient, but I warned the member for Welland-Thorold earlier. I'll have to name the honourable member. Would the Sergeant at Arms take him out, please.

Interjection: He hasn't done anything.

The Speaker: Yes, he did. I'm sick and tired of it.

Mr Kormos was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: New question.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training in relation to the answer he gave to the Leader of the Opposition with regard to the Haliburton County Board of Education. I have a copy of the Haliburton County Echo, Tuesday, April 16. It says:

"After a month of anguishing over how to absorb \$1.2 million in lost revenue without decimating the school system, Haliburton board of education has been told by the province its funding cut will be only a quarter as deep.

"Haliburton-Victoria MPP Chris Hodgson delivered the startling news before a standing-room-only crowd of mainly parents, educators and students at a special school board meeting Tuesday evening in the high school gym. Hodgson told the gathering that Education Minister John Snobelen had considered the devastating effect a massive funding cut would have dealt the board and decided to cap the decrease at 15% of last year's \$2.16-million transfer payment."

Could the minister indicate to this House whether or not he was accurate in his response a moment ago or whether the report that attributes this to the member for Victoria-Haliburton is accurate? Did the member get the minister to cut the cut in transfer payments to the Haliburton county board or not?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I can help a little bit with this. You should know that the reductions we have asked school boards to make, the savings we've asked them to make as a result of the Minister of Finance's announcements on November 29, amount to less than 2% of operating costs in boards. 1450

My understanding of Haliburton is that it's a small board and that 2% or less than 2%—I think 1.7%—

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Did they cut a special deal in the back room?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Oriole.

Hon Mr Snobelen: —of operating costs wouldn't represent anything close to \$1.2 million, so I don't know where that number comes from. I appreciate that the leader has read into the record in the House clippings from the County Echo. I didn't read the Echo but I found the story interesting.

I can tell you that as far as I know, the school board in Haliburton does not have a \$1.2-million reduction coming from the ministry as a function of the savings that we announced on the 29th.

Mr Wildman: In this report, Mr Hodgson, the minister's colleague, states that he appealed to Mr Snobelen, who ruled that "A handful of boards" that would be hit

far more severely than others under the province's funding formula, including Haliburton's, would see their transfer payment reductions capped. "It's felt that the 15% cut can be met through administrative reductions," said Mr Hodgson.

Did the minister, in response to an appeal from his colleague, cap the cut in transfer payments to Haliburton county, and is that part of "a handful of boards" that would be severely hit? If so, what are those boards, which ones are they, and why is it that these boards are apparently being treated differently than all of the other boards in the province? If you're going to cap them at 15%, cap them.

Hon Mr Snobelen: First, may I congratulate the leader of the third party on the theatrics. It makes the point very theatrical.

I can tell the leader of the third party that as a result of our asking school boards to find savings that are less than 2% of their operating costs, it would not represent anything close to \$1.2 million in the Haliburton board.

As the member may have been informed previously, there will be a variety of boards, I suspect, across the province that will apply to the ministry for relief from an undue burden if a variety of the different things that change year to year in the GLGs require some adjustment. As has happened in the previous government and the previous government before them, from time to time a board will apply for an undue burden, and if it's appropriate the ministry will go forward with that.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Let's make a deal. Education: Let's make a deal.

The Speaker: The member for Oakwood.

Hon Mr Snobelen: But I can tell you that as at this point, as I told the Leader of the Opposition, no deal has been struck. We will take those applications from boards, and I suspect that there will be several for undue burden, and we will examine them and we'll do something that makes sense for those boards, because we don't want to affect classroom education in the province.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, recently the Hamilton-Wentworth constituent assembly released its report on reform of municipal government in Hamilton-Wentworth. There doesn't seem to be any consensus as to what form that should take. I'm wondering if you can tell this House what position your ministry has with respect to the recommendations made by that constituent assembly.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank my colleague from Hamilton West for this very important question. This government is very interested in municipal restructuring. We believe municipal restructuring will lead to less government, less duplication, and be more cost-effective. All of this benefits local taxpayers, as those in Hamilton-Wentworth.

We believe the best solutions to local problems are initiated and developed at the local level. We are encouraging municipalities to restructure their political and bureaucratic operations so that taxpayers all over Ontario,

and including Hamilton-Wentworth, get the best value for their money.

Mrs Ross: Can you please tell me, in light of the fact that there is no consensus, does our government have any plans with respect to reforming government at the regional level of Hamilton-Wentworth?

Hon Mr Leach: The constituent assembly has spent considerable time examining the regional structure in Hamilton-Wentworth. We look forward to hearing what the community has to say about the recommendations of the constituent assembly. We feel that excellent solutions can be reached by communities coming together to resolve important issues that have a great impact on their lives. The province is here to offer any assistance to ensure that Hamilton-Wentworth provides services to its citizens in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'd like to come back to my friend the Minister of Education and Training. We've heard three different responses this afternoon in relation to what has been reported widely, the apparent special deal that the Haliburton board has received; the county board. The minister has already acknowledged that, yes indeed, there has been some adjustment. The report suggests that the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines, after having discussed with the minister—that some adjustments were made. I would ask the minister if he would simply answer, did you or did you not have discussions or have some representation from the Minister of Natural Resources concerning this particular board, following which cuts were made to the cut to this particular board?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Yes, in fact I've talked to many members of our caucus about their individual boards and I certainly have managed to send an information package out to all those people who have made an inquiry about how their board will be affected in the GLGs this year. I understand that's a fairly normal process. No, as I said a little earlier, we have not made a deal, but we will certainly entertain—and I'm sure that we will get this from several boards, as has been the case in the past—representations from boards that believe they have an undue burden because of past GLG experiences.

As I'm sure the member opposite understands, the reductions, the savings that we're looking for boards to make do not represent the largest part of the GLG effects for many boards. So we will have a look with individual boards and make sure that everything's done fairly and equitably across the province.

Mr Patten: An alleged amount of \$1.2 million down to \$232,000-odd in that particular neighbourhood it seems to me is not inconsequential. That is a very significant drop in the cut that would affect this board, so I have a question, Minister: What are the criteria on which you would review submissions by boards, and would you be prepared to table a list of what the original cuts are now and any changes that have been made to the cuts that

have been offered to the various school boards in the interim?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question. So he'll know, the undue burden section, which has been used many times by many governments—in fact is used almost every year—is regulation 307 in the Education Act. So there is that information.

Secondly, for the information of the member—and I have said this before today in this House; I'll say it again—our reductions to school boards amount to less than 2% of operating expenditures, about 1.7% for the average board. That is not, in my view, and I think in the view of this government, an unreasonable amount to expect our system to find savings outside of the classroom.

In the area of Haliburton, in the Haliburton boards, 1.7% does not represent anywhere near \$1.2 million. I don't know what the number would be, but it would not even be close to \$1.2 million. So I don't know where that number comes from. It certainly isn't a result of the savings that we've asked school boards to take on. It may be a result of some other normal fluctuation in the general legislative grant, and we'll have a look at it.

VEHICLE EMISSION TESTING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. In the Toronto Star today it says: "Brenda Elliott is apparently under house arrest, forbidden by Premier Mike Harris' officials to speak to the public in anything other than tightly controlled situations." Minister, today is Earth Day, and I'm going to give you a chance to break free and give you an opportunity for once to speak up for the environment, all on your own today.

1500

Pollution Probe recently said the largest single cause of smog is automobile exhaust. A future with more people, more cars, more kilometres driven means even worse smog problems in the future. At the end of this month the voluntary vehicle emissions testing program which was to form the basis of a mandatory program will come to an end. Will you today commit to implementing within the next year a mandatory vehicle emissions testing program for the Windsor-to-Ottawa corridor?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the member opposite for the question. There are a number of issues of concern in this province and we continue to work on all of them. We've been recently talking about the issue of water, and the member opposite raises the issue of air. She will know that there is a pilot project ongoing right now called protectAir, which is a vehicle testing program that is being monitored to see how effective it is in reducing air emissions in the urban centres and to determine how well it works on a public basis.

Ms Churley: You've been talking about air and water all right; that's all you've been doing while you've been cutting and slashing, all through the Ministry of Environment and Energy, \$200 million. We've been told that there are no plans for a mandatory vehicle emissions program such as the one in BC.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Who told you that?

Ms Churley: We have our sources. In fact, we are told that you have no plans except to dismantle environmental protection. You cancelled the green communities program that helped reduce energy use, therefore creating less air pollution.

As I am sure you are aware, the city of Toronto passed what would have been Ontario's first bylaw to prevent vehicle idling. This would have helped to reduce smog, but incredibly the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing wouldn't allow the city of Toronto to proceed with the bylaw. Can you explain to the people of Ontario why you didn't stand up for air quality and human health in view of the Minister of Municipal Affairs' decision to prevent the city of Toronto from taking measures to protect our health?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would like to say that there are many ways of dealing with air issues and we are exploring many of them. I mentioned the voluntary program. As a member of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, we have been working on new fuel formulations and new low-emission vehicle standards for the country of Canada, never mind the province.

There are a number of ways to go about this issue. We are working with partners to determine the best way to go forward to deal with the air issue as a whole in this province.

GREATER TORONTO AREA

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I've been all morning in my riding of St Andrew-St Patrick, where people were asking me what is happening to the GTA-Libby Burnham report. We haven't been hearing what is the status. I wonder if you could fill us in.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for the question. The Burnham panel, led by Libby Burnham, with the help of our colleague Derwyn Shea, has—

Applause.

Hon Mr Leach: That's a very well-deserved round of applause.

They heard over 300 submissions, and they're in the process of finalizing their report. I expect to get their final report sometime this week. We all know that the GTA Task Force is going to affect the lives of millions of people for decades to come and we want to make sure, before we take any action, that we've reviewed every aspect of it.

Ms Bassett: Just to clarify, do you mean when you say before you take any action on it that you are going to consider the recommendations, or are you going to move forward on what Libby Burnham and Derwyn Shea's report suggests?

Hon Mr Leach: As we know, the Burnham report was established to get feedback on the recommendations from the Golden report from the GTA Task Force. Their direction was to see what type of consensus there was throughout the community.

We all know these issues are very complex, that we are going to have differences of opinion between those in the rural part of the community, those in the 905 area and those in the Toronto core. We want to make sure that before we make any decisions that are going to affect the members of our community for years to come, we have the input and response from everybody who wants to be involved. We intend to do that. Some of the answers were complex and are going to take a little time to review, but I can assure the member that we will have a direction coming forth within the next short period of time.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. He has made a very significant admission in this House this afternoon. He has told this assembly that, contrary to his first answer, which was that there was no special deal to the Haliburton board of education, he has now recanted and has admitted, as the Haliburton paper, as the Minden paper and as CBC have all reported, that in fact there was a very special deal made for the Haliburton board of education.

I met yesterday in my community of Renfrew county with representatives of the Renfrew County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. They have seen their grants cut by \$2.75 million, which represents fully 10% of their operating dollars. They haven't heard anything about these special deals, and they are desperate to know what they are to do.

On their behalf, I ask the minister, how did he provide the special deal to Haliburton? Was it by applying the undue burden provision? If not, what mechanism other than that did he use? And what is he prepared to say to the Renfrew County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, which is facing a cut of \$2.75 million this year, representing 10% of its operating dollars in a jurisdiction that is equally poor in terms of its assessment base as is the Haliburton board of education?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Let me make it very clear to the member opposite. I don't know how many times today I will say this, but I'll keep saying it until—perhaps if you write it down you won't have to ask the question again. We have not—I have not, my ministry has not—made a deal with the Haliburton board. However, as I have also said, if there's a board that believes it has an undue burden, I mentioned a little while ago that there is a regulation in the Education Act that permits boards to appeal to the ministry for relief. If those come in, we will consider them in light of the precedents in the past. I'm sure that, as in the past, there may be a board or two or three that require some relief from a grant reduction.

However, I want to point out again, because I think this is important, that the savings we're asking school boards to make represent less than 2% of their operating costs. We believe school boards can make those reductions. If there is some further reduction in the grant, it will be because of an anomaly in the GLGs. I would have thought that a member who's been in this House for a long time would have already experienced that.

Mr Conway: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker, and I want you to hear this point of privilege.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member has a personal point of privilege?

Mr Conway: Absolutely, and it's a short one. Earlier this afternoon in question period, the Minister of Education said point blankly to my leader that there was no special deal, no deal whatsoever for Haliburton county. Later this afternoon, it's become absolutely clear that he made a special deal, that has been unadvertised, for the county board in Haliburton. That conduct is dishonourable, and I say to the Minister of Education that that dishonourable conduct now causes him to give an apology to this House because he did not tell the whole truth.

1510

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I have new information that relates directly to the point that the member for Renfrew North has just made.

The Speaker: I'll hear your point of privilege, but I want to say first that a point of privilege is something that's very grave and something out of order and I would like to hear it distinctly. I know there's a disagreement, but I will hear your point of privilege.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, my staff has just within minutes spoken to Mr Bradley, the superintendent of education of the Haliburton County Board of Education. He stated that the 15% cap, of last year's total operating cost, in cuts, was conveyed to the board by Mr Hodgson. He stated that the board and the ministry are still working out the details. This has been offered by the government and he knows of no regulation that would allow for this at this point.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Indeed, there is a disagreement here. Tomorrow—

Mr Conway: Mr Speaker, we are not allowed to lie in this place. That's the fundamental question.

The Speaker: Order. Nobody is allowed to lie in this place.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I think you have some very good questions for question period tomorrow. That issue is over. Tomorrow there will be question period; it will be time to raise the issue again.

Interjections.

The Speaker: No, the question period is over. What's your point of privilege?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I want to ask you directly, Mr Speaker, about the provision of information through the Legislature to the public, as part of our responsibility here is to ensure that the public does have accurate information.

The leader of the third party has indicated that the announcement about the change in legislative grants to the Haliburton board was made directly by Mr Hodgson. It indicates similarly in this article that the board has not received official notice of the legislative grant announcement. Mr Hodgson indicates that there are other boards similarly affected.

The way in which the government carries out its responsibilities to boards is to provide notice directly to the boards of the general legislative grants. Every board is waiting to have exact information before those grants come out. Mr Speaker, what—

The Speaker: Order. There's a process here also whereby you can have a five-minute late show, if that is the avenue you would like to proceed on, but we have dealt with it, we're in routine proceedings and the next item of business is motions.

Mrs McLeod: Then I will serve notice of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Education to my second question placed this afternoon and ask for that late show.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My point of order relates to the decision you made earlier this afternoon to remove the member for Welland-Thorold. I believe this is the third time you have chosen to name the member for Welland-Thorold, and while I understand I cannot appeal your decision, Mr Speaker, I do want to make it clear that I have serious concerns, given the behaviour of many members in this assembly. I do not believe the member's behaviour was out of line with that of a great number of other members and I think it's coming very close to the point where members are going to feel that one member is being centred out by the Chair. I would just ask the Speaker to consider that.

The Speaker: Thank you. The House has not been under what I would call a quiet order in this Legislature. I had warned the member earlier on. There have been a lot of members today. On the weekend I had a lot of people talking to me about decorum in the Legislature and I think it's about time we all took a look at it and tried to be more even, and I've tried to be more even.

PETITIONS

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition put forward by a province-wide coalition of seniors, students and bus industry employees working together to protect transportation in small towns and rural areas. I've got hundreds of signatures from Thunder Bay and north-western Ontario. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini has proposed legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts.

"The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

I'm proud to sign my signature to it.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition that is signed by some number of individuals from in and around the Toronto area. It reads as follows:

"Whereas security of tenure, or the right to remain in our homes, is a basic need for all; and

"Whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons, and as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent controls remain in place and in effect for this province."

I sign that petition.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Six hundred and forty-seven good people from the city of Etobicoke signed this petition, and I would like to—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): There's more than 647 good people in Etobicoke.

Mr Stockwell: No, I didn't say that, although I could understand the member from Cochrane not understanding.

Anyway, this is what they had to say:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the situation regarding overcrowding in York Condominium Corp, 340 Queen's Court, and other locations has worsened considerably; and

"Whereas the Condominium Act has not been amended to correct this problem;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows"—and this is where the rubber meets the road, as they say:

"To amend the Condominium Act to allow municipal personnel into individual condominiums to investigate overcrowding;

"To provide the condominium corporation with more control over rental units;

"To allow the condominium or its legal representative to enter a condominium without prior notice; and

"To allow the police to assist in the quiet enjoyment of the majority of occupants by working with the owners of the condominium to discourage loitering and disruptive behaviour by groups and individuals."

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have more of the 16,000 signatures to save the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That a recommendation by the psychiatric hospitals restructuring committee to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital be rejected.

"We believe the restructuring committee has not fully considered the case for retaining the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

"We believe the hospital and the community of St Thomas provide care and caring for psychiatric patients which is equal to and better than London.

"We believe closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital will have a devastating impact on the economy and residents of St Thomas and Elgin county.

"We believe London can better absorb the impact of closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital.

"Finally, we believe it would be cheaper for government to retain the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in terms of capital improvements required to both facilities.

"Therefore, we request that the government refrain from endorsing and implementing the recommendation to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital."

RENT REGULATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition with respect to rent control, and it's signed by a good number of residents of my area who are expressing to the House their serious concern with the possible elimination of rent control. It goes like this:

"Whereas the Harris government is planning to remove rent controls; and

"Whereas the removal of rent control legislation breaks a campaign promise made by the Conservatives during the last election; and

"Whereas a great number of tenants are seniors and people on fixed incomes and many have had their incomes cut by 22% due to the social assistance cuts and cannot afford increases in their rent; and

"Whereas growing unemployment and the scarcity of affordable housing in Metro makes the removal of rent control an even greater disaster for tenants and for people who cannot afford to buy homes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario keep their pre-election promise and not remove rent controls and continue with the Landlord and Tenant Act and Rental Housing Protection Act."

I will affix my signature to that.

1520

CHILD CARE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition from many people within my riding of London Centre to all members of the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the children of Ontario deserve accessible, quality child care; and

"Whereas the child care review committee of the Harris Conservative government is considering cutting subsidies to child care and threatening to introduce user fees; and

"Whereas the Harris Conservatives are also contemplating a number of changes to current child care legislation that would lower licensing standards so that child care centres would be required to renew their licences only every three years; and

"Whereas the child care committee of the Conservative government has discussed handing the enforcement of regulations over to a self-regulating body;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to ensure that child care subsidies be restored to the level introduced by the previous NDP government, that licensing standards be maintained at the current level and the Conservative government ensure that the enforcement of regulations not be devolved to the child care industry."

I'm proud to affix my signature.

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): I'd like to present a petition from a small group of people from Lincoln. I am not in total agreement, but I'll read it.

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services is undertaking a review of the child care system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore stability and balance to the child care system by (1) ensuring that all licensed child care providers are treated equally, with all sectors having both the same benefits and responsibilities; (2) ensuring that all licensed child care centre staff receive the same benefits from the government, specifically wage enhancements and grants, regardless of the status of their employer; and (3) ensuring that all funding goes directly to the provision of care for the children and the families in need."

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I want to read another of the hundreds of petitions that have been presented in this House by myself and the member for Hamilton Centre regarding St Joseph's Hospital.

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care funding; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign, the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in their campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton health task force related to any hospital closures in Hamilton-Wentworth, and in particular St Joseph's Hospital, 50 Charlton Avenue East, Hamilton."

I'm pleased to sign the petition as well.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Steve Watson and thousands of other Canadian Auto Workers members have not forgotten this government's anti-democratic procedures around Bill 26 and continue to send in petitions that read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"I oppose Bill 26. I protest this Tory proposal to (1) deregulate the price of prescribed medicine, (2) dismantle the services that make up the common fabric of our communities and (3) introduce a two-tier health system,

one for the rich and one for the rest of the citizens of our province.

"This Bill 26 is draconian. The way it is being handled by the Tory government is anti-democratic. The government should withdraw this bill and commence broad, community-based consultations on the future of public services in Ontario."

I proudly affix my signature to theirs.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals; and

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of troubled youth, and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas the principles of discipline, self-help and a regimented environment at Transition House have combined with the counselling and support to provide youth with the motivation and self-respect to return to school or find jobs; and

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on the statistics of children and youth in crisis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and places the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham and Kent county."

I have affixed my name to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here another petition, this time signed from a number of people up from the community of North Bay actually.

"Whereas security of tenure, or the right to remain in our homes, is a basic need for all; and

"Whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons; and

"As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent controls remain in effect in this province."

I have affixed my signature.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in regard to rent control.

"That rent control abolition would lead to a steep rise in rent through the persistent shortage of affordable housing in Hamilton-Wentworth; among other factors, tenants who are among the most affected by ongoing mass layoffs, wage cuts and hiring freezes and senior citizens on fixed incomes will suffer greatly if rent controls are abolished. We are not in favour of the proposed abolition of rent controls by the government and urge this government not to get rid of rent controls in Ontario."

I affix my signature to the petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

This was organized by Greg Cressman and I affix my signature to the petition also.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "We, the undersigned, are opposed to the proposed changes to workers' compensation in Ontario, including the elimination of the current bipartite board of directors; the reduction of temporary benefits from 90% to 85%; the introduction of an unpaid waiting period for compensation benefits; legislated limits on entitlements, reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements;

"Workers' compensation is not a handout; it is a legal obligation that the employers of this province have to workers in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent accidents, no reduction in current staff levels at WCB and continued support for the bipartite board structure."

This is signed by a number of residents from Leamington, Wheatley and Tilbury.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition, this time from the city of Toronto, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need for all; and

"Whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons; and

"As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent controls remain in effect for the people of this province."

I have signed that petition.

1530

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF BRANTFORD ACT, 1996

Mr Ron Johnson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr60, An Act respecting the City of Brantford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI ÉLECTORALE

Mr Harnick, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Election Act / Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Any debate? Who had the floor last, please? The member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I did plan to come into the House today to speak about Bill 34 and some specifics that were related to this bill that are of grave concern to everyone in education and all those affected by education. I do think, though, that the latest happenings over the last couple of days where it's come to light that our Minister of Education and Training has decided to take after his leader, the Premier, in bringing the good old days back to Ontario—Mulroney has come down from the mountain and descended on the Legislature in this new reincarnation that looks an awful lot like the Minister of Education and Training, Mr John Snobelen.

I have to tell you that I have some grave concerns about what our minister in the House today has alluded to under questioning from those of us in the Liberal caucus who asked the Minister of Education to explain why there is a board of education in the Haliburton area that received a significant level of cuts and why that board suddenly had their cuts reduced by three quarters of their full amount. Why would it be that the Haliburton area seems to have a Conservative member of provincial Parliament? Not only is he an MPP and a Conservative; he is also a member of cabinet.

To me it is clear this government is about deals. This government is prepared to make a deal. For me and where I come from, that is just not good enough. The people of Ontario are going to say, "I do not want leaders who are prepared to come to Queen's Park and make deals," so if you happen to have children who live in the riding of a cabinet minister, your education level just might be okay, but if you happen to live and have children who attend a school system in some other riding that doesn't have a cabinet minister in it, your board is going to be faced with enormous, insurmountable cuts, which is what's happening across Ontario today.

All I've got to say is, I want the people of Ontario to know this Conservative government is about making deals. They're making deals when it comes to the environment, they're making deals when it comes to the selling of Hydro, deals when it comes to the LCBO, but finally you have gone far enough. The Minister of Education is making deals when it comes to the education of the children in Ontario. It is totally unacceptable. It is reprehensible.

I cannot go back to the people of Windsor and say that I have anything to do with the group of Ontario parliamentarians that is led by the likes of John Snobelen and Mike Harris, who are all about making deals. Who's paying the piper over there?

We have the people in education from the wonderful area of Victoria-Haliburton who were devastated to hear that they were facing \$1.2 million. When you come from a board which is a low-tax-assessment board, you have a desperate time trying to fund the quality level of education that we have all come to expect across Ontario. I have county rural boards in Windsor-Essex county as well and indeed in my riding. They have suffered historically from not having the level of funding required to provide all of the programs they would like to.

I would submit that there are areas in my own riding that are very similar in terms of the tax levels and moneys flowing to the board that the same minister, Chris Hodgson, has in Victoria-Haliburton. I, however, am not a member of cabinet. I, however, do not have the ear of the Minister of Education and Training, because what it took was people to get to Chris Hodgson and for Hodgson to make a call to the minister and say, "We need to make a deal." What they did was make—

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 23(b), could the Speaker direct me, exactly which part of this diatribe is pursuant to Bill 34?

The Acting Speaker: This is not a point of order.

Mrs Pupatello: I must say I find it interesting that the member, Mr Clement, should try to find a point of order with what I'm saying. He's been in the House certainly a lot longer than I have, and there are definitions in the book. All of us have them in our desks.

Let me say that we are talking about—

Mr Clement: Point of privilege.

The Acting Speaker: You know what a point of privilege is.

Mr Clement: My rights are violated by that—

The Acting Speaker: This is not a point of privilege. Take your seat, please. The member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Mrs Pupatello: I agree. That has nothing to do with our discussion this afternoon. Bill 34 represents what this government is doing to education across Ontario. What it outlines is how boards across Ontario will, if they must, eliminate JK, for example, what they will be doing to the teaching profession across Ontario. The boards must make this decision based on the level of funding they receive from the ministry. But what we have heard over this past weekend and all day in the House today is that the level of funding that comes from the ministry depends on the kind of deal you can make with the Minister of Education and Training.

So don't talk to me about what is included in Bill 34, because educators across Ontario know what appropriate programs are for their area. They know what they're supposed to be doing for the children in an equitable fashion, no matter where they come from in Ontario. But what makes the difference now is that they can't offer JK if you come from Durham, because they don't have the money, and so they've cancelled it. They don't have the money if you're in Peel county; they don't have the money to offer JK. Now, they may have had the money if there happened to be a cabinet minister who could make a deal with the Minister of Education.

I see the member for Lambton here. How nice to see you today. I happened to be Petrolia on Friday evening and spoke with a number of people, and I say to the member how difficult it must be for you to watch what your fellow members are doing, the deals they're making, because you for the last 20 years have been a solid member of the Liberal Party but now you're sitting on that side of the House, opportunistically taking advantage of running as a Conservative member. I must tell you, Petrolia is a beautiful part of Ontario.

I must say that while I may get carried away with comments in the House about what happened today, when we realize that the Minister of Education is nothing but an incarnation of Brian Mulroney and so is the Premier, Mike Harris—Brian Mulroney has come down from the mountain incarnated in Mike Harris, and now that, that same kind of attitude, the dealmaking that is going on, this is the stuff of legend.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd just like to remind the member that we're debating Bill 34.

Mrs Pupatello: It is of grave concern to me that for all of history, when the Ontario government decided they were in charge of education in Ontario and they would see that all children who come through the system in Ontario are guaranteed a level of quality, equitable education, in the passing of Bill 34 we have lost that, because Bill 34 allows school boards—which must make decisions because their funding has been cut. They have made decisions to cut JK not because educators haven't recognized the need for JK but because they do not have the funding. In committee with the minister in January, Dealmaker Snobelen, he said: "We are not cutting JK. We're making it optional." That was absolutely the furthest from the truth in committee last January. But here we have Bill 34, and they are saying in Bill 34 it has now become optional. Why? Because they've cut all the money allowable for places across Ontario which would like to honour that.

1540

The more you see it in the press, the more the Conservative members ought to know this is not anecdotal on junior kindergarten; long-time and scientific research shows that the more we have in education for early childhood, the better the children will perform, not just in school but in life. In fact, when we spend the money in early childhood education, for every dollar spent, we save \$7 in social spending later on. This is not anecdotal, this is scientific. You can see it editorialized in papers today. It's not as though it were not a known area. If there were one area the Minister of Education would understand if he were truly a Minister of Education, it would be the significance of early childhood education. Instead, he's come forward with Bill 34 that literally will gut it from many places across Ontario.

Again it depends on the money the school boards receive. I would encourage all the educators, trustees, nay, all members of the public across Ontario to call Minister Hodgson, because he has the magic touch. He can call the Minister of Education and say, "Please don't make those kinds of cuts to my school board." It works, because the Minister of Education is a dealmaker.

Let me share with you the CBC radio script: "Local MPP Chris Hodgson, a cabinet minister, managed a little political magic and had the cut reduced by two thirds." What do you say to the people in Lambton? What do you say to the people in St Andrew and St David? What do you say to the people in your ridings when you don't come from an area that happens to be held by a cabinet minister and now these cabinet ministers have the power to change the level of funds? I can't wait to go back home to my riding to talk to my Windsor board of education, Catholic board of ed in Windsor, and certainly those in the county, to say, "It's the cabinet ministers who are making these decisions."

I have to tell you how disappointed I am, because there are some things across Ontario that we all believe are good things and required for the future. The Liberal caucus for several months now in here has brought out the issue of youth employment and what education means, the fact that jobs are desperately required, especially for young people. The media now has been playing for weeks on end—every weekend there are special editions on the issue of jobs and how related all this is to education.

Even in the *Globe*, Saturday, April 20, this past Saturday, speaking about relevance to jobs, it reads: "The determining factor, more often than not, is education." In fact, for the period between 1990 and 1995, "The breakdown is enlightening: For those with high school education or less, there were 887,000 fewer jobs; for those with at least some post-secondary education, there were 1.2 million more jobs."

What we must realize as legislators is that when we're making decisions, when we're trying to pass—or not—bills like 34, we've got to see what the long-term impact is going to be. Clearly educators, people who work in the field, parents, children, young adults, are telling you that the changes you are making in education in Ontario are not good in the long term for the people of Ontario. That is a significant point.

Our minister has shown little regard for people's opinions. The Minister of Education has shown that he is not prepared to listen to the people, the people who work in the industry and who are affected by the industry.

The people at home always tell me, "Oh, those guys on the other side of the House, they're not listening to us anyway," but perhaps they'll listen to others, to what the KPMG Transformation Update—I think members opposite even get this in their offices—talks about in terms of change, "The key issue for governments will be how best to achieve the change."

This is put out by KPMG. They discuss: "The key element in change is consultation. In some areas, consultation with affected groups or citizens to obtain consensus on restructuring strategies will be critical to successful transformation. The governments need to tell stakeholders what the resource framework is, the policy intent, the range of options to be considered, the desired outcomes."

This Minister of Education has failed to do so. This Minister of Education has not done this kind of consultation. From the get-go, when first named minister, he had record six-minute meetings with what he calls interest groups, but people who are dedicated to the education system, so he's failed in terms of consultation. He has failed in telling the public where he intends to go with education. All we see at the end of the day is Bill 34 and this is hurtful in the long term to education in Ontario.

I cannot help but wonder why Bill 34 is so critical today. All I can say is that this government is intent on removing the tax cut information as far away from the cuts it is making to ministries as possible. This is very clever from a marketing perspective, and I suppose that's more of the whiz kids at work at Queen's Park and in the office of the Premier, but we must not forget the reason the cuts are being made in this way and this deeply. The reason, so the government says, is because they are deficit-fighters, because they are going to attack the debt, because they've got to get rid of the deficit. I will not use Liberal numbers in this House; I will only use the numbers that were given to us by the esteemed Minister of Finance. In his own numbers, the debt in 1995-96 was at \$97.2 billion, but in 1996-97, after we are suffering the effects of what they are doing to education, the debt is growing; the debt is growing to \$105 billion.

Why are people suffering in the way they're suffering, at the depth they are suffering, and they are still nowhere near moving in the right direction in attacking the debt? They have created some kind of an illusion that they are going to do all of this because they're going to attack the debt, and what happens is that by the time this gang is prepared to go back to the electorate, the debt will never have been higher in the province of Ontario.

When I see the kind of information this government refuses to bring into play when it talks about the cuts, the real reason is the tax cut. The government is going to borrow money to finance a tax cut, and in my community when parents are seriously concerned about whether they are going to have junior kindergarten, I have a problem with that; so do they.

If we look at some of the numbers available, numbers that are important to remember, the number of teachers—I guess this government would call these people "interest

groups," but we must remember that we have 11 million people in the province of Ontario: 210,000 of them work as teachers; the number of Ontario citizens who go to school every day is two million; then we have the number of Ontario citizens who have children in school and that number is 2.75 million.

1550

Now we are talking about half the population of Ontario somehow tied up with the education system, and I say to the dealmaker, the Minister of Education, is this a special-interest group if these people are concerned about it? Does that not say that half the people of Ontario are concerned about what they are doing to dismantle the education system?

I want to tell a story to the House. Many of our members of the House were invited to attend schools in the last session, and I did my share as well. I remember going into a very young class where the children were about five years old, and there was one child who was sitting off by himself and not interacting with other children. There was an awful lot of learning happening in the room in very different ways, certainly very different from when I was in school at that age.

These children were learning by playing, and this one child was not involved whatsoever in the play. He sat there quite alone. It was obvious that he was off by himself. I remember going over and I sat next to him and I said to him: "Why aren't you involved in these games? Why don't you want to go and play?" He said to me that he was only waiting because he didn't have to go to the school very much any longer because pretty soon he was going to go back to living with his dad. He doesn't really want to be here.

What was impressive about the moment was that when I went back to the teacher to retell the story, she said that the child is in the middle of a significant custody battle and that this happens all the time, that parents today are very different from what they used to be and that what children go to school with, in terms of baggage, is very different today than what it used to be.

What that story told me, and I think it's something all of us knew intuitively, was that teachers aren't just teachers any more. Today teachers have to be psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, referees, breakfast makers, and that's because children aren't the same as they used to be. There was never a need for better teachers in the system than there is today.

The direction this government is moving in makes it very difficult for teachers to have the kind of energy and vitality they need to be in the classroom today. I've spent as much time speaking with educators as I did with children while I was travelling through schools, and what I heard was that teachers are losing their oomph because they feel they're constantly under attack by government, that they feel they're constantly under attack by the Minister of Education, that he throws and bandies about expressions like: "Who needs prep time? They're not really working." How does it make the people on the front line feel?

I met many teachers who spend many, many hours and truly make a difference in children's lives. I think, by the fact that we are seeing layoffs across Ontario in the way

that we are, we are losing the very best; we are losing the young, the energetic, the vibrant. Teachers have a significant role to play in who we are and who we eventually will become.

In an article this weekend Peter Drucker said that he thinks the key element we have to find in young people is ambition. I think that young people find the attitude or the ambition to achieve because of the teachers they have teaching them in their classrooms.

The passing of Bill 34 will be a very sad day for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Windsor-Sandwich on an excellent presentation on a very bad bill, but I would like to take this opportunity more to remark about the disgraceful presentation made by the Minister of Education in this House today.

I've been a member in this House since May 1985 and I can tell you that never have I seen a minister recant, never have I seen a minister stand in his place and give four different answers, never have I seen a minister so wholly and totally embarrassed by the performance he put on today when he insisted first that there was no deal, and second, could not give us any assurance that boards were being treated fairly across this province.

This is the minister who has brought forward Bill 34 and expects it to be debated in this House. I say to you that this minister has no credibility. I congratulate my colleague for her comments on this bill but I can tell you that I believe that Mr Snobelen, the Minister of Education and Training, should be embarrassed; he should stand in this House and apologize. He has given us the wrong information, misinformation, and I cannot find parliamentary words to describe the actions of the minister today.

I would call upon him during this debate on Bill 34 to clarify the record so that every school board in this province which is affected by Bill 34, which is affected by the cuts that are being levied by this government will know what are the criteria, what is the process, what is the procedure, so that they will know they will be treated fairly, that they will be treated the same.

It is wrong to have legislation brought forward to this House at a time when ministers are making backroom deals, where they are treating school boards differently across this province simply because they may have a member who has the ear of the minister. That is wrong.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Tory times are deal times, as the member for Essex said. I couldn't agree with that more.

I would like to commend the member for Windsor-Sandwich on her speech in this House today with regard to the bill that's before us, dealing with education. I would like to say first of all that she's 100% right when she talks about the deceit that the Minister of Education is trying to put forward in saying that somehow you can cut \$1 billion out of education and it's not going to touch the classroom.

Mr Speaker, I think you understand and that the member for Windsor-Sandwich understands and, more importantly, that the people of this province understand that no such thing could happen. You remove \$1 billion

from education, you come in and you open a toolbox such as what we're seeing under this omnibus education bill and it does mean that classroom education will be affected, and affected severely, I would say.

I would also like to commend her on the second issue the member raises, because she's right: The Tory cabinet has made a deal with Victoria-Haliburton. That is what has happened. She spoke to this particular issue, as you well know. What happened, I would suspect, is that the member for Victoria-Haliburton, the now Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and who knows in the future, was worried about going to a public meeting and said, "Minister of Education, I need to bring a peace offering to the people of Victoria-Haliburton." What did he do? He went and lobbied—as he should, as a member—the Minister of Education and Training. But what is wrong is that the Minister of Education and Training has made a decision here to treat one school board differently from the other. To that I say shame to the government and shame to the Minister of Education.

For a government that says they want to be different, they are certainly showing well that they have not forgotten the roots of the trough of government power that they knew so well for 40 years in this province and will lose in another four years for exactly this kind of behaviour.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It's very interesting to hear the accusations being levelled at the Minister of Education.

Mrs Papatello: Dealmaker; he is a dealmaker.

Mrs Marland: I would like to speak without any interjections, if you don't mind, to the member for Windsor-Sandwich. To listen to the comments that are being made on her speech by a certain member who said she'd never seen a member have to recant—that member was in this House when Liberal cabinet ministers jumped and switched and changed more than I have ever seen through three governments.

If this minister truly was a dealmaker, the first place he would make a deal would be in the region of Peel, in his own riding. The point is that this minister has so much credibility that he doesn't do the most obvious thing that a minister would do, and that is protect his own riding. Obviously, if that was the goal of this minister in dealing with the challenges of funding education around this province, the first place he would protect is the region of Peel.

He is not doing what he is being accused of. What he is doing is making the really tough decisions that have to be made, and he's demonstrating that not only does he have the ability to make those decisions but he has the ability to carry those decisions out. We wouldn't be in this position of making those very tough decisions if we had not had the precedents of the wild funding and mismanagement fiscally of the last 10 years.

1600

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Certainly it's unusual that you'd find a member across the way defending the actions of a minister during question period when we're discussing Bill 34, and I think it's reflective of the way this government perceives education to be and the importance placed upon it. But I agree with the member

for Windsor-Sandwich when she says that Bill 34, when passed, will be a sad day in education because it is the beginning of the destruction of education.

Clearly, she is absolutely right. It does destroy adult education. Let me tell you for a second that adult education courses, as presented now and as funded now, do exactly what we in government want. We want people back doing meaningful work. They do this by getting the skills necessary over the course of a very short term. Reducing it to a continuing education option will not provide those people with the necessary skills to develop themselves, to develop a skill, to develop the opportunity within that person through co-op programs to ensure that person is provided with meaningful work, needed work, with an opportunity to improve himself.

Bill 34 clearly destroys adult education, it destroys the goals of adult education, and there is absolutely no way anyone on the government side of the House can say that reducing adult education to a continuing education status is not inferior to the present situation, to the present way we encourage adults over the age of 21 to come back into the educational system, to provide themselves with the skills necessary to get off welfare.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs Papatello: In summary, again, Brian Mulroney has come down from the mountain and has reincarnated himself in the form of Mike Harris. He has taken all of his lessons from Brian Mulroney, whom the public trounced not that long ago.

When you know that there is proof of deals happening, when you have proof that you have a cabinet minister who bent the ear of the Minister of Education, the dealmaker, and reduced what the level of cut was going to be in that riding, while the rest of Ontario suffers if they don't happen to be fortunate enough to have a cabinet minister, that Minister of Education, the dealmaker, will rue the day. We aren't going to forget that, nor will I let the people where I come from forget that this government is about making deals.

I have to tell you there's a gentleman who is a fellow Rotarian, Mr Clare MacLeod. He retired in 1974 as the director of education in Windsor, and this man is wonderful. He has a legion of experience in education. What he said is that today the system isn't working. He said that in 1974 everybody complained the system wasn't working then either, because the reality of education is that we should never be satisfied with the quality of our education system; we should always want it to be better. In fact, education has continued to evolve year after year and the day that it stops evolving we must worry.

This government is the first government in history to go backwards in time. Even though the NDP made a legion of errors in the last term, it too was dedicated to the education system. Everyone is trying to improve it except this government. I also say Brian Mulroney is not welcome in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): It's actually with some regret that I rise to speak to Bill 34, with regret because I never thought, having been in this House now for some five years, I would ever have to stand in my place and

speak on a piece of legislation that causes the kind of devastation I believe this bill does to the system of education in this province.

This bill takes out of the school system the requirement that school boards provide junior kindergarten. It guts the system of adult education as we know it today, and it also for the first time ever in the history of the province, to my knowledge, begins to require the use of property taxes from one or more parts in the province to be used by the Minister of Education to either fund education in other parts of the province or perhaps to just go into the general coffers and help fund the 30% tax cut this government is so intent on proceeding with.

We've heard a lot in this House about education. We've heard a lot from the current Minister of Education about the crisis he believes exists in the system, a crisis which we're seeing more and more he's having a lot to do with inventing. We've seen today a couple of very striking examples again coming, interestingly enough, as these things seem to be happening more and more, not from observations made by members of the opposition but from observations made by the government's own members.

We talked earlier today about the observation of the member for Grey-Owen Sound that the Minister of Education really doesn't know what he's doing; at times, it seems that way. We heard from the member for Quinte an even more damning statement, saying that the provincial government lied when it told Ontarians that provincial funding cuts to education wouldn't show up in the classroom.

I think what these comments from government members themselves are beginning to reveal is what the public out there, particularly those who are affected most directly by the school system, have understood for some time, certainly since this government and this minister began to bring about the kinds of cuts to the system of education in this province.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we don't have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please verify if we have a quorum or not.

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: I was saying that government members themselves are beginning to realize what those who either work in the education system, or are affected by it by way of having children in the system, or indeed the general population at large has known for some time, which is that the policies of this government, the policies of the current Minister of Education, are devastating the education system as we know it.

The \$400 million of cuts that the minister announced in November, we know, by his own admission, translates to at least \$800 million of cuts in this first year alone, and likely closer to \$1 billion by the time all is said and done, because of the difference in the fiscal years between the province and the school boards. But we need to make people understand, as indeed they are understanding, and as I say again the government's own backbenchers are now beginning to also understand and

publicly reflect, that rather than talking about dollars and numbers, what that means in a real way is that the quality of education in our school system is going to be hurt, it's going to be cut, it's going to be damaged in a serious way by what this government is doing.

Bill 34 provides at least three key examples of that, and I want to talk a little bit about each of those. The first area we're seeing reflected in Bill 34 in terms of the cuts is the elimination of junior kindergarten. Now the government members will say, as I'm sure the minister has said, "You know, we're not eliminating it, we're just simply making it optional." Then the minister has ignored, I would suggest, and the government members have ignored, all of the research that has been done in this province, in the rest of this country and across the world which indicates very clearly that if we're serious about giving our young people the kind of support they need that will help them grow into healthy and active citizens in our society, one of the most important things we can do is to invest in the early years by providing both a good system of child care and a good system of kindergarten across this province.

1610

I understand there are issues and concerns to be dealt with respect to how kindergarten, particularly junior kindergarten, is implemented across the province. When you look across Ontario, you have to recognize—and certainly I as a former Minister of Education recognize—there are some issues that have to be addressed in terms of how you implement junior kindergarten, particularly when you're dealing with young children in, say, some of the rural areas of the province.

I recall the time I was at the ministry, and even the year subsequent to that, when people were working on developing, and had indeed developed, a variety of models that took into account the understanding that providing junior kindergarten as part of an early years program, as part of nurturing and supporting young children, as part of that very basic understanding, could be done in a variety of models, in a way that allowed people to put together the very best in the kindergarten teachings and the research and the pedagogy with the very best in the care that comes out of a good child care system.

As a member of the former government, I was very proud when we were able to move forward on the early years program, an initiative which saw the bringing together of the very best in child care and kindergarten programs, an initiative I am happy to say I had something to do with in the time I was at the Ministry of Community and Social Services and something I believe is really the future of the school system as it relates to young people, particularly as it relates to young children.

We saw in the actions this government took the elimination of the early years program. Now they are compounding and making that even worse by removing from school boards the requirement that they provide junior kindergarten. As I sit in this House and listen to the exchanges that go back and forth, by this point in the game I have stopped being amazed at the kind of about-faces we are seeing.

I remember when there was an issue around the provision of junior kindergarten by one school board very

close to where we are, the Peel Board of Education. As I, as Minister of Education at the time, attempted to deal with that board in convincing it that it ought to continue to provide junior kindergarten even though it wasn't legally mandated at the time but it was going to become legally mandated, as it later did by the legislation that we brought in, I remember both Liberal and Conservative members from that area of the province lobbied me publicly and privately to do everything possible to ensure that program was maintained.

What I hear today from Conservative members is that the Minister of Education has to make the really tough decisions. Well, I'm sorry, you don't make the really tough decisions by cutting junior kindergarten. There's nothing tough about that. There's just meanness and nastiness about that and there is also a very clear lack of understanding about what is best for young children when you gut junior kindergarten, when you remove that program which should be at the basis of providing a nurturing environment for our young people.

I know that in the kind of dollars-and-cents approach government members want to take to every issue, somehow this seems to them to be far away from the priorities of what they should be doing, but I want to ask them to reflect on what it is they are doing, because as they remove this part of the school system they are removing one of the fundamental platforms upon which everything we believe in in terms of supporting and nurturing young children is built. That I say, not only as someone who has had some involvement in a school system, but now as a father, as someone who has seen that level of support and that level of understanding grow over the years across the province, across the communities, from people from all political parties.

As I said earlier, I never thought I would see the day when a government in Ontario would be bringing back the clock so far as to remove junior kindergarten from the school system of the province. All I can do on that point is ask the government members to reflect, and to hope that as this bill goes out to committee and as we hear from people, they will have somewhat of an open mind to the comments that will come from people across the province—hopefully, if we are able to get hearings across the province, as I believe we should on this bill—people who understand that the sign of a good and healthy society is also measured by the support we provide to our children, and that gutting junior kindergarten is the very last thing you should be doing, if ever doing, in terms of dealing with cuts, in terms of dealing with restructuring the spending of education.

When I was Minister of Education, I certainly also had to deal with some tough decisions around how you used dollars that weren't there in as large a number as you might have wished. What we tried to do, and what this government is not doing, was to work with school boards to ensure that money, yes, is focused towards the classroom, but not at the expense of those very basic programs.

The Minister of Education can go on and on as much as he wants about the fact that only half of the money is spent in the classroom. I have to ask the Minister of Education, where does he place the spending in the

school system for teachers' aides? Where does he place the spending for principals and vice-principals, who in his equation are outside the classroom? Is he suggesting we run schools without principals and vice-principals? Is he suggesting we run schools without providing teachers with adequate time to prepare their courses? Is he suggesting we not bus children to schools? All those are things that are outside his formula of the classroom and that therefore we can dispense with, as he puts it.

I say to the minister and to government members, it's not that easy. You can't just simply come to a nice, clean dollar equation and forget about what you are doing in terms of decisions that are affecting people, and in this case affecting the youngest citizens in our province. I say again to the government members that they ought to consider and take another look at this particular piece of Bill 34, and hopefully through the process their minds will be changed.

I want to speak also about another couple of provisions that are in this bill.

The first is the question of adult education. What Bill 34 does—and it's written in the kind of verbiage that the rest of our Education Act is written in, which is that it sounds like it's a permissive type of situation—is allow school boards to direct certain adult persons to enrol in continuing education programs rather than in day school programs. What does that mean? What that means is that we are going to be seeing the gutting of the adult education program in this province.

Coming from a jurisdiction in the city of Toronto that's part of Metropolitan Toronto where we value very much the kind of support we have been able to provide in our school system, not just to junior kindergarten, as I was talking about earlier, but also to adults through the continuing expansion of adult education, we know that that investment in adults, just like that investment in young people I talked about earlier, is essential if we want to have a society in which citizens are able to take care of themselves and their families. The investment today in supporting people who are adults to be able to go back and finish their high school diploma is key to being able to create that healthy society in which people are then able to go with that diploma and be in a better position to get and keep a job.

Let there be no mistake about it. I don't know what kind of rhetoric the government members opposite have been told, but what this bill does is it means that those programs will, piece by piece, disappear because school boards, because of the cuts that the minister is imposing upon them, will be forced to close down those programs, to channel those adult students into continuing education programs which, by definition, do not provide credits, do not allow students therefore, adult students in this case, to earn their secondary school diploma, do not allow, because it's at a lesser funding level, for the supports to be provided outside of the direct classroom program to adult students who are trying to go back to school and finish their high school diploma.

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Again I ask the government members to reflect upon that because what they are also doing with this portion of Bill 34 is completely inconsistent with the kind of

position that we keep hearing day after day from the Minister of Community and Social Services, who says he wants to, and this government wants to, support people to become more independent. This program is doing that, by the thousands across this province, not just in the big metropolitan areas like Toronto but right across this province.

I will be interested to see how government members will respond locally as their school boards start to gut those programs because they will have no choice, because as the minister is giving the school boards these tools, as he calls them, whether they like it or not, they are going to use them because at the same time he's also cutting some \$800 million from the system of funding of education in this province.

Here again we are seeing that very clear direction, a direction which is completely contrary to what every other government in this province, certainly in my memory, has ever done. We've heard arguments before, we've had arguments before about how much more we could do to expand the system of education, to improve the system of education. But I don't ever recall being in a situation like this where we are having to argue to stop these kinds of massive cuts that are being implemented day by day, week by week, in the school system and that we are seeing reflected in the thousands upon thousands of layoff notices that have been issued to teachers and to other support staff in this province.

The protests are growing across this province, from parents like the ones, to just use one example, in Palmerston school in my riding who have come with initiative after initiative and way after way to try to impress upon this government that they as taxpayers want us to invest in the system of education in this province because it's by investing in education that we invest in the future of our society. They understand that. Many of the people across this province understand that. I don't know why the government members and the Minister of Education and Training fail to understand that.

It's really quite a simple idea. If you want a healthy future, you build on that by having a good system in place to support our young people, to support adults as they are trying to go back to school. You don't do that by gutting the very programs. If there are ways to make these programs more effective, and there are, then you do that, but you don't do that by bringing in place in one year \$800 million worth of cuts, because then you just gut the system of education.

Not only are we seeing the reduction of funding from the province to the school boards by way of this \$800 million in cuts, but to add insult to injury we are now seeing that position taken, the one ludicrous next step which is, now the minister is going to actually reach into the property tax base and take that money and use it in whatever way he thinks fit.

I want to talk, therefore, about the third piece in this bill that I find completely abhorrent, that is, the use of property tax dollars, initially just in Toronto and Ottawa and possibly Muskoka, as I understand the numbers, but I want to say to the members opposite, eventually in other jurisdictions, be they Windsor or be they Hamilton.

What is happening here is that the Minister of Education and Training is proposing through Bill 34 to reach into the property taxes that are being paid for by people across this province, initially, as I say, in those jurisdictions in Toronto, Ottawa and possibly Muskoka, and to use that money, to claw back that money and to apply it in other parts of the province or, I believe, apply it to the general coffers so they can justify the 30% tax cut.

I recall, back when I was on the school board in Toronto, being in a meeting with a former Minister of Finance, a Liberal Minister of Finance at the time. I can tell my colleagues opposite that in that group of chairs and representatives of the school boards in Metropolitan Toronto were reflected all the political parties we have reflected in this House, and to a person, we took a position which I'm happy to see the trustees in the Metropolitan Toronto area are continuing to take today, which is, "Over our dead bodies will we send a cheque to the province of Ontario."

I don't think the members opposite, and I want to talk particularly here to those members from the Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa areas, have understood what kind of Pandora's box they are opening up. They can position this on the jargon that I'm sure they've been given by the Minister of Education, that it's a question of equity, a question of making sure we all are being funded at the same level. They of course ignore the fact that the grant formulas from the Ministry of Education don't mean anything and haven't meant much for the last number of years. Over 95% of the school boards in Ontario are already spending far beyond those artificial grant ceilings, which means they don't mean anything.

But the members opposite had better think again, think really hard about what it means to start taking property taxes from seniors, from injured workers, from working-class families, indeed from all families today in Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa and tomorrow in other jurisdictions and use that to fund a 30% tax cut. It is just completely abhorrent. That is not the way you fund the system of education in this province.

Yes, there are problems, but solutions have been indicated. We should be going the other way around. We should be moving towards removing education and social services from the property tax base. I know the members opposite will say, "Why didn't you do that?" I agree. We didn't do it. I wish we had done it. As one who continued to argue for us to do it, I regret we haven't done it, but you don't compound the problem by going the other way. You don't compound the problem by taking property tax dollars from some jurisdictions and bringing them into the provincial coffers. You know what happens when you do that? Then you've tried to insert yourself into a situation that creates even greater inequity.

How do you justify to the property taxpayers in Toronto and Ottawa that not only are they not receiving one dime from the Ministry of Education to pay for the needed services in these areas, but indeed now the Ministry of Education will expect those property tax dollars, property tax dollars paid by, among others, injured workers, seniors, working-class families, to be used to help pay for either the system of education

elsewhere or indeed, and even worse, the tax cut that's going to benefit most the richest citizens in this province?

I say to my colleagues across the floor that it's time they reflected on this. When this bill gets out to committee, they will hear on this point alone, and indeed on the other two, the kind of outcry they have never yet heard. If they think some of the discussion we had around Bill 26 was tough on them, they have no idea what they're in for in terms of the outcry that's going to come as a result of the passage of Bill 34.

I know that this afternoon and on the other days of discussions we've had on this bill, we tend to go through these debates in a rather quiet fashion, but I want to underscore again that what Bill 34 does, in my view, is gut the system of education as we know it, remove the essential pillars of the fundamental of education in this province, which has always been to strive to do more, to strive to provide more support, not less support for people.

What this government and this Minister of Education are doing is really implementing that crisis they themselves have created. Because unlike what we heard during the election, where one of the basic promises was, "We are going to protect classroom spending," we have seen, and we are seeing with the \$800 million in cuts, instance after instance, example after example across the province where teachers' jobs are being affected and, more importantly, classrooms are being affected.

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When you take out teachers from the system, it means there are fewer of them and therefore there are more children in each class, and when there are more children in each class, it means the quality of education goes down.

When you remove adult education programs, it means you are saying to people out there, "We really don't mean all that stuff about supporting adults to become more independent."

When you gut junior kindergarten, it means you are saying, as this government is saying and this minister is saying: "Forget the rhetoric. We really don't care about the support and the nurturing we have to provide our young people."

I'm sorry, all of this stuff about the need to balance the books is just hogwash, because you don't balance the books on the backs of children; you don't balance the books on the backs of people who are trying to get their high school education so they can make a better life for themselves and their children; you don't balance the books by making a system of taxation which is the most regressive system of taxation—the property tax system—become more and more the key way in which you fund education, which is the other thing this bill is doing.

If you believe in education as the future of our society, as I do, then the only thing left for this government to do is to recognize it has made a royal screwup in this bill, withdraw this bill and acknowledge once and for all that what it has done is wrong and put a freeze on the cuts until it gets a handle on the impact they're having out there.

I don't anticipate that my words here today are going to particularly convince the members opposite, but I do

say to them that they ought to reflect very seriously on what they're doing through this bill. I hope as we go through committee hearings on this piece of legislation, government members will begin to realize the kind of havoc they have wreaked in the system of education so far and how much Bill 34 compounds that situation by gutting the system of education, by removing supports to the youngest and most vulnerable among our citizens, our children, and how that is just plain, plain wrong. I hope they will see the error of their ways, not by virtue of my standing up here today and making the points, but by virtue of them listening to their constituents, through the committee hearings and through what they are telling them today as they go back to their ridings on a week-by-week basis.

Certainly so far we've seen that a couple of members of this government have begun to listen and have begun to reflect what people are saying out there: the member for Quinte and the member for Grey-Owen Sound. I'm not looking for public admissions, because I also understand what it's like to be in government and that when you realize you've screwed up, when you realize you've made a mistake, you don't always have the ability to stand up and admit that. But I do say to the members opposite that what we today heard, and over the weekend heard, from the member for Quinte and the member for Grey-Owen Sound, other members of the government caucus are also feeling. I would just say to them, in whatever way they wish to do it, to make sure their Minister of Education and their Premier understand that they also are not comfortable with what is going on, because it's not by gutting the system of education in this province that you build the kind of society I hope we all want to build.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): There's just one observation I would like to make to the member for Dovercourt's remarks, and that would appear to be a common theme of regret running through all his remarks about, if they had only done what they should have done when they were here, then we wouldn't be facing some of the fundamental problems we are confronting today. He speaks rather eloquently in a way about, if they had only dealt with the property tax challenge which we are confronted with in terms of the market value assessment, unit value assessment or any other assessment methodology which one tries to create as a solution to this very complex problem. They didn't do it. That's the reality.

He talks about us as if we're living in a vacuum, as if we don't talk to our constituents. I'd like to remind the member for Dovercourt that on the weekend I had a number of meetings with teachers and with the chair of the Etobicoke public school board. It's interesting to note that in their attempts to reach some cooperative ventures in transportation with the Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board, one board is saying, "Because we have safety belts on our buses and the other one doesn't, we're going to continue to bus our students separately." That's the sort of problems we're facing today.

Typical of the member's remarks, it's always from the top down that we have to have the solutions. Well,

sometimes the top-down solutions don't work any more than the bottom-up ones. One of the key foundations of this particular bill is to get school boards cooperating in these areas that are not directly affecting the classroom but to do so in an indirect, support way.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I found the member's remarks very helpful to this debate, particularly as they relate to the effect this bill is going to have on education at the local level, and I know that he had in mind when he was making these remarks the remarks of the member for Quinte, Mr Doug Rollins.

Mr Rollins, as we know, was at a high school in Belleville on the weekend and according to the Belleville Intelligencer—the article reads as follows:

"The provincial government lied when it told Ontarians provincial funding cuts to education wouldn't show up in the classroom, says Quinte MPP Doug Rollins.

"In a frank exchange with about 250 high school students, teachers and public school board administrators from Belleville and the Quinte area, Rollins said Friday there is 'no question about it, there's going to be an effect in the classroom.'...

"The MPP said there is 'no desire for this government to see the quality of education decline due to the lack (of education funding) to students.'"

I have respect for the member's opinion, and I know the member who just addressed us, Mr Silipo, has that same respect. He also said there is going to be an effect in the classroom. I know he had in mind, when he was making his remarks about Bill 34, the member for Grey-Owen Sound, who said the Minister of Education was out of whack and that he had obviously created a crisis and that crisis is there now.

Now, when it comes from those of us in opposition, some members on the government side say that's probably a partisan consideration, but when it comes from government members themselves, when it slips out in the small towns and smaller cities across the province what their true views are, then we really find out the government has broken that particular promise about education funding and that it is hurting people within the classroom context.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Sarnia.

Mr Bisson: There's a rule in the House here: One party at a time.

The Deputy Speaker: Pardon me. The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: I too would like to lend my support to the member for Dovercourt. I think the member is quite right in his comments around adult education in regard to the effect that is going to have on communities across Ontario, especially in light of what is happening in our economy.

The government itself recognizes that our economy is going through a humongous amount of change, and that change brings the need for new technologies and utilization of those technologies, at the very time the Minister of Education is saying, "We're going to make it easier for school boards"—not that they'd want to do this—"to reduce adult education opportunities for people in our communities." For a government that purports to be a

government of common sense, where is the common sense in reducing adult education in light of what is happening in the economy of Ontario?

The other comment I thought was interesting by the member for Dovercourt was the question of the role of the backbenchers in all of this, because I think the member is quite right. The backbenchers in a new government are always very, one might even say, giddy. They've been elected to a government and they're in the "Oh boy, everybody still loves me" kind of attitude. They don't recognize that decisions are being made that are going to affect their very future and survivability as local representatives of their constituencies. I've got to say to the backbenchers, I got re-elected because I did pay attention to the people in my constituency.

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What I'm saying is I think one of the things the people here have to recognize is that you, as backbenchers, in the end are the ones who have the weight with the government. You're the ones in the end who can allow or you cannot allow legislation to go forward in this House. When a government comes forward with legislation such as we're seeing now, I ask you to ask yourselves a very, very simple question: How does this square with the constituents of your riding and how will they feel about it? The people of Cochrane South are certainly opposed, and the people in your ridings are no different.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Sarnia.

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I would like to speak on Bill 34. When I was—

The Deputy Speaker: It's questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member for Oriole.

Mrs Caplan: This is a very important debate on Bill 34. It's been brought forward with a minister that I believe no longer has any credibility. But more than that, I'm very concerned because we know that on Saturday, April 20, in the Intelligencer, the Belleville newspaper, the headline read, "Tories Lied, Says Rollins." It says: "In frank exchange, local MPP admits cutbacks will be felt in the classroom."

During the election campaign, we clearly heard Mike Harris promise that his Common Sense Revolution was not going to hurt classroom education; there would be no cuts to the classroom. Today we asked a question in the House. We know the member from Grey has said: "I do believe our Ministry of Education is a little out of control. I think our minister really doesn't know what he's doing."

We know that Mr Rollins, the member for Quinte, is quoted in his local newspaper as saying that there's no question about it; there is going to be an effect in the classroom. That's why the newspaper headlines and people right across this province are echoing what the Intelligencer said, and that is that the Tories lied when it came to classroom education. That's a direct quote from the newspaper.

I can tell you that the people of Oriole and the people of this province and the people who know we are debating Bill 34, an education bill, will not stand for the fact that Conservative backbenchers are not the only ones who know that the Minister of Education and Training and

Mike Harris did not tell the truth when they said there would be no cuts to the classroom.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Dovercourt has two minutes.

Mr Silipo: I just very briefly want to say I appreciate the comments made by members. I want to reply particularly to one of the comments made by the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. He's the one who used the phrase—I didn't, but I wish I had. He said that sometimes we think they are living in a vacuum. Yes, I have to say to the member opposite, their actions, certainly on this bill, show that they are living in a vacuum.

They don't understand that it's one thing to do the kind of cooperative things that in fact this bill does do. If that's all this bill did, we would have all supported it in half an hour and we'd be on to do some other more important or equally important things, because there is a provision of this bill that does allow and does encourage greater cooperation in terms of agreements between boards, whether it's to deal with the busing questions and the safety-belt issue that the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale talked about or indeed some other even broader issues. That is something that all of us—and I see in addition to myself at least two other former ministers of education—in one way or another have all strived to encourage that to happen. So in that sense I think we all would find that part of Bill 34 very easy to support.

The problem is that the other parts of this bill, which essentially gut, as I said earlier, the system of education in this province by removing junior kindergarten, by removing adult education, by starting to claw back property tax dollars, today from Toronto and Ottawa and possibly Muskoka and tomorrow who knows from what other additional municipalities, back into the coffers of the province so that they can fund their 30% tax cut, that is just plain wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Sarnia.

Mr Boushy: When I was first asked to speak on Bill 34, I was hesitant. I believed in it, but I didn't have any strong feeling about it. But after touring St Patricks high school two weeks ago in my riding of Sarnia, as well as St Therese, Johnston Memorial and Lansdowne school on other occasions, which allowed me to talk with numerous students and teachers, I'm convinced of the urgency with which we must pass this bill, Bill 34. My tours were real eye-openers. What really impressed me during my fact-finding visits was the stress being put on science and technology and partnership with local industries.

When I was young, and that was quite a while ago, and I went through school, and I dare say when most of the honourable members of this House went through school, times were very different. Lessons and even whole subjects have changed considerably, as I found out. School programs have adapted to reflect students' needs. Students are learning more and more about the uses of new technology and the value of teamwork. The driving need for these changes has been our change in society.

Just as classes have changed to address the future needs of students, I believe the Education Act needs to be amended to facilitate an education system reflecting our society's needs in a realistic fashion. To improve our

province-wide system to ensure it is based on excellence and student achievement, to make sure it's affordable and continues to take care of our needs to make it accountable to both parents and taxpayers, we need to rethink how our education system works. Change, therefore, is necessary.

Today's students are learning more efficient and effective ways to do everything. That's an essential skill for tomorrow's leaders to acquire. As politicians, we are obligated to guide the education system along those same lines. The status quo, then, will not do and is not enough, as the opposition are claiming. If we continue to spend beyond our means and ignore the demand for change, we will deny our children the quality education they deserve, and that is what this debate is about.

So far, I have to admit, I have been very disappointed by the nature of the debates today. Take, for example, the member for Windsor-Sandwich. If you think that's a debate on Bill 34, you must be wrong. I don't think she had any debate at all. Was she debating the act to amend the Education Act? I doubt that very much. I have never seen in this House, as a newcomer, a very real debate. What I have mostly seen is not even real argument but rather simple contradiction. Opposition members stand up and say that whatever we in government say is wrong, and believe me, that's that.

1650

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's not true.

Mr Boushy: It's true.

With all due respect to this House, we have to improve the level of debate. I have had several people tell me they have watched this parliamentary channel and thought we looked like a bunch of kids arguing.

I found this insulting, not to us but to the children of Ontario. The students in Sarnia, in my riding, all know how to work as a team for a common goal. They know the purpose of debate is more than just trying to make those who disagree with you look bad, or too happy. Perhaps it's time we politicians took a lesson from the students.

I have some statements about Bill 34, which include some assumptions I have made. I think the best way to approach this debate, as well as the many we will have in the future, is to start with what we agree on. First, can we all agree that our priority is to give our children an excellent education and the future opportunities they deserve?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): You bet it is.

Mr Boushy: I take it for granted then that we all believe this.

My next assumption is that the education system must be affordable or we cannot maintain our priorities. That's why we have to restructure in order to find savings, and just as the students are learning more efficient and effective ways to communicate and achieve results, the school system itself must keep pace with the demands of reality.

Since local boards know their business far better than you and I, than Queen's Park ever could, it's only common sense that we give them the opportunity to develop solutions locally, and that is through amendments to the Education Act. I'm shocked anyone could accuse our

government of refusing to take responsibility for changes to the education system. We're doing the most responsible thing we can by giving local boards more flexibility.

Locally elected officials always ask for more control on the local level—anyone involved in local politics would know that—more control of their destiny. I speak from experience. During my 22 years in municipal politics, the beef I had and my colleagues always had was the politicians in Queen's Park telling us they knew what Sarnia needed better than we did. I disagreed then and I disagree now.

Decision-making must rest with the people directly affected by the choices that are made. That's what democracy is all about. Through this legislation we're enabling local boards to make choices and find solutions unique to the areas they serve. In effect, the decision-making process will be more democratic because it is on the local level.

My friend across is talking about junior kindergarten. This bill will restore junior kindergarten as a local option. It will provide flexibility for school boards by letting the number of sick days be negotiated between individual boards and their teachers. School boards will also be able to direct certain other pupils to continue education courses.

They are well-known measures and I believe the minister has more than adequately addressed them, so I wish to concentrate on two other measures of Bill 34 I'm really impressed with.

The proposed amendments to the Education Act allowing a wider range of agreements to be made by boards is a useful tool. It's quite evident to me that today more than ever before, no individual, group or institution can stand alone. Ontario is a community of communities, and the welfare of all of us depends on our ability to work together—teachers, parents and students. I have spoken to all, and they agree that teamwork and partnerships are essential to a prosperous education system. I know every member here has heard the same, that the Minister of Education has heard this same belief over and over again. That's why amendments are being made to encourage sharing of facilities, equipment, transportation and various other support services.

In the bill, school boards will be able to conduct their activities more efficiently. They will also become more accountable to the public through required reporting of their efforts to implement cooperative measures. Effective cooperation between boards and other public sector agencies can create savings and ensure that classroom funding is protected.

I do not agree with the argument of the opposition that students will be negatively impacted because of restructuring measures of this government. The argument implies that the boards will not take advantage of the opportunities they will have. You are saying that the local boards don't know what to do. I don't believe that. Everyone I have met from the Sarnia boards has demonstrated a tremendous commitment to students. Unlike many opposition members, I have confidence in the intelligence and ability of board members to work towards a better school system, and they know better than we do.

It seems to me then, and I think to most people, that cooperation and partnerships are the key to reaching our goal of making Ontario the most prosperous place to live, work and raise a family. I'm sure all members agree that this is a priority that drew all of us to politics. That's why I'm puzzled about the objections some members have over Bill 34 enabling negative grant boards to participate in the fairness and equity of financing the education of students across Ontario.

Let us be specific for a moment. This bill enables the Metro and Ottawa public boards and the government to pursue an agreement whereby the boards will participate in the cost-saving exercise on an equitable basis. I want to remind everyone that we are one province. We share many things. We all pay taxes, too much, I might add, but we will be taking care of that problem very soon. The collective tax base is used to provide numerous services for residents across Ontario, ranging from health to municipal transfers, to agriculture, to transportation.

We all contribute our share for the benefit of Ontario as a whole. Why, then, should education be any different? If the members from the Toronto and Ottawa areas examine the benefits they receive from tax dollars across Ontario, they would agree that they get their fair share. I would also remind the honourable members that our government's anticipated contribution to the pension plans of teachers in Ottawa and Metro is greater than \$105 million this year.

Ontarians put a lot of money into building and maintaining systems and institutions that don't directly affect their ridings, for example, Toronto's subway system.

1700

The point I'm trying to make is that we are all in an integrated system. We all share our resources and our tax dollars to contribute to the wellbeing of people everywhere in Ontario. Students from Sarnia to Toronto to Parry Sound to Ottawa all deserve to be treated equitably and fairly in our shared education system. Metro and Ottawa account for 18% of the provincial education expenditure. If we do nothing to enable these areas to assist the rest of Ontario, the fairness gap in spending among boards will be widened.

There is currently a big difference in the amount spent on students across Ontario, ranging from below \$5,000 per student in some boards to over \$7,000 in others, and Bill 34 goes a long way to fixing this. Every student in Ontario deserves a high quality of education no matter where they live, and every taxpayer deserves real value for their tax dollar. This bill speaks to the concerns of an economically sustainable education system that protects the future of our children by ensuring excellence in student achievement.

Bill 34 is a new beginning for the students of Ontario, who are heading to a brighter future. I am proud to speak in defence of it.

Finally, I wish to remind the honourable members of the opposition that you can't stand in the way of progress. You can't stand in the way of progressive change. The status quo you've had in the past did not work and is not acceptable to our government and is not acceptable to the people of Ontario. If we don't adapt our education system to meet the challenges of the future, we're

denying reality and we'll be trampled by it. The time for progressive change is overdue. Our children's future demands it, parents demand it and taxpayers demand it.

I ask the honourable opposition quite humbly and very seriously to put aside partisanship and support this commonsense legislation. Here's a chance to show your constituents that you are here not merely for the sake of engaging in eternal arguments but that you're willing to throw your support behind measures that will result in a better-educated and -trained population.

Trust me. When we fix everything that needs fixing and Ontario is back on top—and it will be—you will feel good about that, and you'll feel good about saying you crossed party lines because in your well-thought-out judgement you knew we were right.

This education bill is about fairness, balance and unity—above all, unity. It's the result of tremendous consultation, and I will proudly be voting in favour of it.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mrs Boyd: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to comment on my colleague from Sarnia's speech. It was a read speech, not a debate, and I think his comments on debate in this place are called into question. The spontaneity of debate in this place is supposed to be done without read speeches, and the member read every word of his speech, so he is not in a position to comment on debate within this place, although I would agree with him that it very often is of a very low level.

I would tell the member that as to his comments late in his speech where he said we wanted to maintain the status quo and were afraid of progressive change, that is simply not the case. We are not afraid of progressive change. It's the regressive change we see in this bill, particularly around the education of young children, that we object to. The progressive changes in education have shown us that the earlier we educate children, the more we help them to become socialized at an early age, the better their chances of success in the future. The member is right, that's what we all want: success for our children in the future. We are agreed on that. What we aren't agreed on are the methods.

The member talks about allowing local municipalities and local school boards to make choices. When you chop off their arm, their only choice is to stop the bleeding, and that's what they're trying to do. We're saying that chopping off the arm is not the way to provide health and good education to our communities. What we need to do is to work together in a concerted and gradual way, rather than suddenly coming in, chopping off the resources and then throwing it back to local boards and saying, "We're giving you all these choices; make your choices," when they're not real choices, when they are choices that are forced by the cards the government has forced upon those areas.

I say to the member, we do need a better level of debate in this place and he ought to participate in that.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): I'd like to compliment the member for Sarnia. I remind members opposite and those viewers watching that it's difficult, the first time you give your speech in the House, your maiden speech, to not work from notes. I think probably, if we all think back, we can recall pretty vividly our-

selves in the same situation and working rather copiously with notes. I recall vividly the members opposite, when they were the government, member after member all spoke from prepared text. I know the member from Cochrane is shaking his head—I can hear it—but they did in fact speak from prepared text.

I think what the member for Sarnia was saying was very interesting. Whether it was prepared text or off the cuff or however, he was saying that he campaigned in the last election and nobody was arguing for the status quo, nobody said today's education system was working.

The member for London Centre talks about progressive change. With all due respect to the member for London Centre, I don't know what changes you made that were progressive. In fact, I don't know what changes you made. It seemed to me you allowed the education system to continue down a path that was rife with a bad system, with producing uneducated kids. It was a terrible system and people were coming at us daily telling us about the ineffective education system in Ontario. You sat in there for five years. I remember the Minister of Education, Mr Silipo, used to get up on a regular basis answering questions and we'd say it was just blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. He never said anything. You never did anything.

He's come forward to express his support for legislation that's making dramatic and different changes to our education, some of it controversial, some of it broadly accepted, others not so. To the member for Sarnia, I tip my hat. I think this is the kind of representation the people of Ontario are looking for and I think it was well spoken.

Mr Bisson: I want to rise and speak against the comments from the member for Sarnia. The part that really bothers me is this line the government is using. It's reminiscent of the line the Minister of Education first gave his bureaucrats as he was videotaping his ideas so he could pass his pearls of wisdom back to the ministry staff. He wanted to be able to create a crisis and say that our system of education did not work, and if he was able to create that crisis, somehow or other he would be able to go back and make the kinds of changes that needed to be made, in his view, around education.

First of all, for a member of this government to stand up such as I've just seen and say that our system of education doesn't work and puts out a bunch of kids who have no education, I think is a disservice not only to the boards of education but the thousands and the tens of thousands of teachers and students who work quite hard at making our system of education a good one.

Sure, any system can be improved on; there's no question about that. Sure, you could make changes in order to make the system of education more affordable; no argument about that. But to sit here and say that the status quo doesn't work goes to show that you know absolutely nothing about the system of education in Ontario, because our system of education does work by and large. We have one of the best systems of education as compared to other jurisdictions, not only here in North America but in places all across the world. Our economy would not support a system of education such as you report. Can you imagine an economy in Ontario being as prosperous as it has been over the years and building the

high-tech sectors of industry that we have if our system of education never worked?

Sir, I tell you, give your head a shake and stop reading the lines that the Minister of Education is giving you in order to repeat the mantra he has given the people of this province that our system of education is somehow in a shambles and that he has to make the changes. The changes are that he doesn't believe in public education and he is withdrawing service from the people of this province, and it's shameful.

1710

Mrs Marland: I too would like to congratulate the member for Sarnia on his maiden speech in this House. I think it would have been slightly more classy of the two members for the New Democratic Party, the third party in this House, instead of being so meanly critical to have recognized that this was in fact the maiden speech of the member for Sarnia.

I say to the member for London Centre, who made such a point of criticizing that it was a read speech, that I sat in this House for five years and listened to them when they were the government reading every single answer as cabinet ministers, and even at that, they still came in as ministers introducing their bills and read every single word.

To quote the words of the member for Hamilton Centre, who said, "Oh yes, and he read every single word," I recall when you were the minister with a number of different titles that you came in and read every single word and you were an experienced politician, and I think it is very unfair—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): It's not true.

Mrs Marland: You're right. It's not true. You weren't experienced. At the end of five years you still weren't experienced. But I think to criticize the maiden speech of one of our colleagues in this House, regardless of party, just shows an extreme lack of class, and to finish off by saying he should have a better level of debate, I would say to you, Mr Speaker, that it was an excellent speech. It was well written and it was well delivered, and if we had had that kind of leadership in the previous government, we would have enjoyed better speeches when they were the government.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sarnia has two minutes.

Mr Boushy: I thought my remarks would improve the level of debate. I guess it didn't. I just want to tell the opposition that quite frankly I do hear these comments, every time I go to my riding, that say that the way the members act "They act like a bunch of kids fighting," and this is a reflection on this House. I thought by just mentioning it might improve the debate, to elevate it to a certain level, but I guess it didn't.

With regard to other matters, may I say that you're always criticizing the government about killing, for example, the junior K programs. I just want to tell you that I heard the same arguments in my riding over and over again, but finally both boards agreed they would go along with the junior K programs on a local level. Some other municipalities, other ridings, did not.

What I'm saying to you is, things will work out. Just wait for our government to go ahead with our programs to make real changes that we promised to do during the election and things will work out.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to just congratulate the member for Sarnia. I enjoyed his remarks. I thought he had some interesting things to say and I appreciated his involvement in the debate.

I really wasn't planning to speak this afternoon to Bill 34, but I was so annoyed about what I experienced in this House this afternoon, I felt—and I mean that and I'm going to try to behave myself this afternoon and I meant what I said. I think the minister's behaviour in this place this afternoon was discreditable, to say the very least.

There are old rules in this place. We are supposed to be guided by the old Victorian injunction that we don't lie to one another. That's the rule. That's why the Speaker calls us to order if we mislead one another. That's the old convention. It belongs in another century, but has got kind of an arcane appeal. I know what the rules are and I'm not about to get myself tossed out of here this afternoon. I'm sorry in a way that my good friend the member for Simcoe East is not here. He seems to be in a particularly definite mood today.

For purposes of today, I got the Hansard of this afternoon's question period, because clearly Bill 34 is all about educational funding and about what the government is doing with respect to supporting, through its good offices, the programs that are developed and delivered at the local level, whether here in Metropolitan Toronto or in my part of eastern Ontario. Let me say at the outset that I understand, and I think all members understand, the pressure that Her Majesty's Ontario government is under with respect to the current fiscal situation. Members opposite will be quick to point out, "We campaigned on the basis of certain undertakings," and I respect that.

Members like the current Minister of Labour and the minister responsible for women's issues and the Premier, all of whom were distinguished chairs of boards of education in this province, would know better than most of us that if you think you're going to take \$1 billion out of the system and not affect classroom environments, you are dreaming in Technicolor. It's a laudable ambition and it's very good politics, but it is unachievable.

I spent the weekend with one of my school boards and it is faced, as a grant-dependent, assessment-poor board—I'm talking now about the Renfrew County Roman Catholic Separate School Board. They are really "up agin it," as we would say. Their general legislative grant is going to be reduced by \$2.7 million this year. That represents about 10% of their operating funds. I say to the House, and to the public beyond, that if you think you're going to reduce the general legislative grant by 10% and have a school board effect those savings in the last four months of the year, let there be an understanding of how this works.

School boards have contractual obligations that bind them, in most cases, through the end of August in any given calendar year. When the provincial government and the provincial department of education tell school boards in April or May that they must effect a certain saving

based on a cut in the provincial grant, the local school boards are going to be operating on a budget cycle that is the calendar year. In the case of my school boards, and I think it's true for all school boards, they're operating on a fiscal cycle that is January 1 to December 31 and they have contractual obligations that bind them for two thirds of this year. Now they're told by the minister that they must come up with \$2.7 million—it's more than that, actually; it's slightly over \$3 million if they take other things into account. They've got to come up with managing a \$3-million budget cut in four months.

Mr Stockwell: We're going to give the money back.

Mr Conway: I'm going to deal with that in a moment.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Okay, we're waiting.

Mr Conway: Who said that? It's important that I know who said that because you'll be interested in what I have to say about it, I think.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: No. Let me be clear. I apologize if that appeared to be a little precious. I can do that sometimes and I'm sorry if I did. I simply make this point: Your attitude on the question of educational finance will be different if you're living in Oil Springs, Lambton county, than it will be if you are in the city of Ottawa, and that is a very major issue.

What we have here today is a situation, and I wanted to raise again the point that concerns me. Yesterday I met with my school board officials and they are absolutely distraught at how they're going to do this in terms of an assessment-poor board.

Mr Hastings: Aren't they innovative?

Mr Conway: Innovative? The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale says what we need here is innovation. Let me just tell you that the county of Renfrew is the largest county in the province of Ontario. It stretches about 100—what is it? From Arnprior to near Mattawa is about—I still operate in miles—140 miles. Its average depth is about 50 miles. I grew up in one of the most rural parts of that large county. If you live in Sarnia and, yes, if you live in Rexdale, one can imagine that geography provides somewhat more opportunity than if you live in the outer reaches of Renfrew. I still represent people who get on a school bus in the morning in the dark and don't get home until well after dark at night, young kids on school buses for over an hour.

1720

The member from Rexdale talks about innovation. These school boards in Renfrew have been, of necessity, doing things that a lot of urban and assessment-rich boards have not yet had to think about because they are much more required to do so on the basis of their very limited resources.

Mr Hastings: They've been doing that for thousands of years—by chariot.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Conway: I don't know the member from Rexdale. There's at least one Shakespearean character that comes to mind.

This is serious business. We have a situation where today the Minister of Education has now indicated he is prepared to make arrangements to cushion the impact of

his already announced cuts to particularly grant-dependent school boards. I have no quarrel with what the member from Haliburton did; he did what a good member should do. What I want to know is, what policy has the Minister of Education in this respect?

Last week some very reputable trustees and school administrators were at a public meeting with this Minister of Education. They had heard that something was afoot, and the question was put directly: "Minister, is there a deal in Haliburton? We hear that there is."

They got what the Leader of the Opposition got today, and I have the Hansard from earlier this afternoon. The Minister of Education was very, very clear. Quoting directly from the Instant Hansard of this afternoon: "*Hon Mr Snobelen:* To help the Leader of the Opposition understand, let me say, very simply, no such deal exists."

That is not accurate and I don't know how else—I know how else to put it and that would get me tossed out of here. But the school officials in Haliburton are talking. They're talking quite openly and quite favourably, and I understand that. My annoyance with the Minister of Education is that he has an obligation, he has a duty to come here and, if he can't be accurate, to maintain silence.

The Speaker this afternoon said, "Oh well, it's the give and take of question period." Let me just say to the Minister of Education—and he apparently has a reputation for a certain facility with language and other things—it will make his career very difficult and very tortuous in this place if we see much more of what we saw here this afternoon, because I suspect if you grew up in Lambton or if you grew up in most of Ontario, there is a word that comes to mind for what we got here this afternoon.

I'm not here to talk so much about that as to the basic issue that underlies it, although I'm not impressed, I will say to the Minister of Education.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: What are you talking about? Are you pulling a Frank Drea: "Come on outside and we'll talk in the corridor"? Don't waste my time with that bravado.

It is very important that we know what the policy is in respect of these grant-dependent boards, because we now have evidence that an arrangement was made with the Haliburton County Board of Education where the initial cut, rumoured to be \$1.2 million, was mitigated to \$325,000.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: The minister mumbles. I wasn't at the meeting last Thursday, but I'm going to tell him that some very good people who don't necessarily oppose his party politically were singularly unimpressed with his lack of response and lack of candour about what was going on. That's what I was asked about yesterday. People said, "We think something's afoot; we think that arrangements have been made."

We now know that an arrangement has been made for Haliburton. Muskoka, east and west Parry Sound and Lennox and Addington come to mind as four other places where, as I recall from my experience at the department, you've got—

Mr Stockwell: Northern Ontario.

Mr Conway: To say nothing of northern Ontario, but those are mid-northern boards and southeastern boards. I would suspect that those boards, among others—and I mentioned the Renfrew county separate board. I cite their evidence again: a \$2.7 million-cut to their legislative grant for this year, and they must effect that saving in the last third of this fiscal year.

Mr Stockwell: It's only 2%.

Mr Conway: I say to the member for Etobicoke West that it's not 2%. It's well above 2%, on the basis of what the board officials said to me yesterday.

But more importantly, these people want to know, what is the arrangement? I see, from the question period of this afternoon, that the minister has indicated—and I don't know whether it's in the Hansard or in the Haliburton county press—to his own colleagues that there will be a mechanism and there will be a provision for hard-hit boards to appeal. That is as it should be. I simply want to say to the minister and to the government that it is absolutely inappropriate, if that is the policy, that it has not to this point been broadcast to all the school boards.

I can't believe that anybody in the department—there's nobody in the department who would imagine that you would make an arrangement in Haliburton and that the people in Muskoka or Renfrew or wherever wouldn't find out about it almost immediately. That, I suspect, is what's happened. I'm not here to have fun at the expense of my friends from Owen Sound and Belleville, but I wonder whether somebody got on the phone to Murdoch and Rollins on the weekend and said, "I hear from my friend over in Haliburton that an arrangement has been made," because that's what's going to happen.

I've got to tell you, today's question period is going to occasion a great deal of interest across the school community. "So there is an arrangement? Great." They would say the minister had made a public announcement. To the best of my knowledge, no public announcement has been made. I can tell you that the very experienced director of education for the Renfrew County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, as of 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon, had heard nothing from the minister and/or the department that there was an appeal process, and he was at a meeting with the minister last Wednesday or Thursday. I confirmed that with him about half an hour ago. Now, maybe something was said when my delegation was out of the room, but I suspect not.

It is bad form, to say the least, that we find out in question period today, thanks to the Haliburton County Echo and the Minden Times and CBC on the weekend, that an arrangement has been made to alleviate the burden of these budget cuts on the county board of education in Haliburton.

Let me say that there is a significant hardship being visited on some school boards over others as a result of this budgetary policy; it is the obligation of any good minister and any responsive government to alleviate that. I don't know that we've yet established how, in fact, in law the minister has done what he's done in Haliburton. The information I have, as of this afternoon, is that the details are yet to be worked out. I have in front of me, I say to those very learned people from the ministry who I see looking very sagelike underneath the press gallery,

regulation 307, the special grant, the so-called undue burden provision. Has the minister used this particular regulation to provide special assistance to Haliburton county? If he has, that is going to be very significant new policy. Let me just read what regulation 307 says.

"Subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the minister"—in this case, the Minister of Education—"may pay in any year, pursuant to a request from a board, in addition to the grant payable under the general legislative grant regulation for such year, a special grant to such board where the general legislative grant otherwise payable to the board has placed or will place, in the opinion of the minister, an undue burden upon all the ratepayers or supporters of the board or upon such of them as are assessed in a particular municipality or locality within the area of jurisdiction of the board."

1730

Is that the mechanism? I expect somebody from the treasury bench will respond. But if it is, it is something that is going to be of very significant interest around the realm this week. If it is not, I would just be interested to know by what legal or statutory authority the minister intends to provide relief from his department's own implementation of his government's budgetary policy.

Mrs Marland: Are you speaking to Bill 34?

Mr Conway: Yes, I am, I say to my friend from Mississauga South, who seems to have a particular interest in matters involving the rules and regulations of the House these days. I wonder whether she is planning on another career we don't yet know of.

Mrs Marland: That's true, I was.

Mr Conway: I thought it but I didn't say it, and you should not say it.

I just simply want to say that we have some explanations owed from the minister. Both of my boards are grant-dependent. We are not, as they are in Sarnia and Etobicoke, to name two examples, possessed of a great deal of industrial and commercial assessment. Let me just say—

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Less than they used to be.

Mr Conway: That's true. The member is right: They have less than they used to, but I've got to tell you, less than you used to is still a heck of a lot more than we have in Renfrew county—

Interjections.

Mr Stockwell: Oh, Sean, we're fixing that.

Mr Conway: Well, you know, the member from—what is your riding anyway? You are given to the most enthusiastic caterwauling of anybody I have seen here in a long time. I just hope some day I have the benefit, when you get up on your feet and you unload just full bore, because you are a true jumping bean when it comes to—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I know you have a lot to say and I'm sure you have even more to do, but you really seem to have a lot to say when you're not on your feet, I say to the minister, the culture czar, the new Nick Leluk of this place.

Back to the question of educational finance—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Well, yes. If you could restrain the culture czar, perhaps I wouldn't be as distracted or as distractible. If somebody wants to make a speech, I'm happy to sit down and listen to it.

Anyway, the question the government faces is the question all governments have faced here in the last 15 to 20 years, and that is that the system we've had for funding education up to what are called the grantable ceilings is not working, and with each passing year it works less efficiently. One of the, if not the, fundamental flaws in this whole system is that the multibillion-dollar pool of industrial and commercial assessment is not very well distributed around the province.

Let me tell you, and I said earlier, the interests of the member from Lambton on this subject are going to be rather different than the member from Ottawa's, and this is not an issue so much for partisanship as it is for region. There is going to be no justice to grant-poor boards until we do something to inject a greater degree of fairness into the grant structure, particularly up to grantable ceilings. The fact that everybody's been spending or just about everybody's been spending over the grantable ceiling for years now doesn't change the fact that we have some fundamental inequities.

I for one perhaps in my party am a bit of an apostate in the sense that I recognize we can do more with what we have. There's no question about it. It is not going to be easy and we have seen in recent years some interesting educational results where outcomes, which are what we all want—I don't know a parent, I don't know a community, I don't know a business or a labour leader in the province who doesn't want, at the end of the day, to have as good an educational result as we can get. I think it is a fair criticism of the past generation that we have spent more time on issues of governance and finance than we have on worrying about results.

Lest people of an older generation get the impression that if we could just now turn back the clock—I'm looking at my distinguished friend from Lanark who has some years and good experience on myself—I want to make the point, and I think it was in 1952 that one of the country's most outstanding academics, Hilda Neatby, wrote a book. The book was entitled *So Little for the Mind*. It was a book that grew out of the Royal Commission on Canadian Arts and Letters and it looked at, among other things, the state of public education in Canada in the period from about 1930 to 1950. Her conclusion was that it was a pretty bad system.

I see the member for Ottawa-Rideau nodding. He may have read the book. It's a damning indictment of Canadian public schools in the good old days of the 1930s and 1940s. Let there be no nostalgia for yesterday, because yesterday was yesterday; there were some good things, but I'm going to tell you there were some pretty bad things too in terms of the participation rate, in terms of our inability to deal with a lot of people who were not academically inclined.

I have to say to the House today, I went to a church-funded university back in the early 1970s. It was the old Waterloo Lutheran University. I sometimes think one of the worst things we ever did for that institution was give them 100% public money. When I went there they were

operating on 50-cent dollars—that is 50-cent public dollars—and the people who ran that system I think managed it very efficiently under the circumstances. The fact of the matter was they couldn't sustain it and they either had to get more public funding or close the door.

I'm not one of those who believe that by simply putting more money into the system you're guaranteed a better result. I'm also, as a former Minister of Education, alive to the reality of the labour-management issues that lurk underneath Bill 34, and I suspect the government is preparing for a dust-up on that front.

Mr Stockwell: An abolition.

Mr Conway: The member from the Kingsway says, "An abolition." I say, when I look at this particular bill—God, he's the member for the Kingsway? Impossible. I don't know a great deal about Etobicoke, but I think I know that much. But one of the issues that we face as a Legislature and that the government faces is what to do about the underlying finance issues. I see in Bill 34, with some sadness, and I know it's very popular, particularly with the over 45 or 50 crowd: Let's get at junior kindergarten. God, has anything come to symbolize the excesses of an old order more than junior kindergarten?

For the time being I suspect that some of us have lost that battle. I think it is truly sad, because if one is careful to look at the evidence, the evidence is clear. If you have money to invest, you ought to invest it in the foundation years.

I know there are many people—I won't embarrass any of my immediate family, but my father's probably watching and I'm not so sure that he's not one of them—who are not particularly supportive of the notion of junior kindergarten simply on the basis that: "When I was a kid growing up there was no such a thing. There was no such a thing for us as either junior or senior kindergarten."

Mrs Marland: You didn't need to go to school, did you?

Mr Conway: Did I need to go to school? Who knows? I spent a good bit of my life there.

But the evidence, I say very seriously, is very clear that if you want a very good return on your investment, and accepting that you're going to cap your investment overall—I'm not going to quarrel with the government about that, and, yes, we are going to have to restrain public expenditures in most places—it is a very, very wrongheaded notion to pull away from formal education the opportunity for junior kindergarten. I recognize that the land is now flush with the notion that it's just some kind of glorified babysitting and it should be attacked and disbanded. I say quite seriously that that's wrongheaded policy. It may be good politics in the short term. It is not good educational policy, and we will pay downstream some price for that, some very real price for that.

One of the worst experiences that one can have as a local member and as a government minister is to go into these situations—and it happens that Peel region is the one that I remember, where one board offered junior kindergarten and the other board didn't. People wonder: "Why is that so? I thought in Ontario we had an entitlement." You simply say, "Well, you know, local boards make local decisions." It's not an easy thing to explain sometimes why in Ontario if you're a supporter of one

board you can access junior kindergarten and across the street it's not available. I think it's a mistake. I understand its popularity but this will be, I say to my friends opposite, a pyrrhic victory.

1740

Other things in the bill struck my attention. The member for Etobicoke West observed that you know the province of Ontario is now going to expect his government is going to carry on the tradition of the Rae government, which is to say that the Ottawa and Toronto school boards are going to be asked to voluntarily offer up some money. I'm sure I heard the member for Etobicoke West complaining about this the other day and I think I heard the question to the minister. He may have forgotten it but I don't think the minister or I forgot it.

The question I would offer to the member for Etobicoke West is, if not that, what in the interest of equity? I'm sure by now all government members know that under the grant plan as it's existed now for several years, Ottawa and Toronto school boards owe us money, and all that is to say is that the concentration of industrial and commercial wealth in those areas is sufficiently strong to allow the province not to pay grants.

Mr Stockwell: But educate our kids.

Mr Conway: Again I'll be very interested to see what the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the first minister do to resolve the tension between the "have" boards and the "have-not" boards. If you think you're going to solve the underlying problems of educational finance by pulling back on the retirement gratuities, by pulling back on the mandatory provisioning of junior kindergarten and some of these other adult education programs, I've got news for you: It is not going to be achievable with those measures alone. I do think that there is going to be an expectation on the part of everyone in the chamber and certainly everyone in the province that, unlike the bad old days, there is going to be in this new order of things a meaningful measure of equality of opportunity.

Let me say again that I am here unabashedly as the member for Renfrew. We have a tyranny of distance that causes pressures on our school boards that would be inconceivable in a place like Metropolitan Ottawa or even urban Sarnia. I am not kidding when I say that we have secondary school districts in places like Barry's Bay, Deep River and Eganville where to organize any kind of program is to have to look at your busing. Opeongo High School, in the heart of Renfrew county, is a secondary school with probably now 700-and-some students, and virtually everyone in that school has to be bused. There may be a couple of farm kids in the immediate area who can walk or take a bicycle but I suspect that 98% of those students have to be bused.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has one of those schools, Tagwi down in Stormont county, I believe, just around Avonmore, that is somewhat the same, and there are others. The Minister of Finance has a situation up in Almaguin which would be another one. In terms of organizing a program that is going to be fair to those folks in rural and northern Ontario, we are going to require a system of educational finance that is fair and reasonable.

I take my seat by observing that it will be with great interest that I and my colleagues, particularly from the rural and grant-dependent boards, will look to the minister's more complete statement in the next hours as to precisely how and when he's going to provide the special relief to the grant-dependent boards.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Stockwell: The member for Renfrew certainly is an engaging speaker and he offers us glimpses of history, of times gone by in eras when some members here were not around, and some of these debates I'm sure have fashioned themselves in circular form. This is probably not the first time he's had this financial debate about the education problems and crises that we've found ourselves in.

If I were to offer some criticism about my own government with respect to education, the criticism I would offer would not be so much with respect to how the bill has proceeded to this point; it's how we've directed our actions. It seems to me that most people in the province today whom I speak to believe there's enough fat in the education system at the local level that they can take out the cuts we've asked for. It seems to me the local levels have chosen to do it differently.

If I were to be Minister of Education—although you'd have a firestorm and a firefight throughout the province—I would say we should have mandated a couple of things: "We're going to pass on these cuts, but you can't lay teachers off and you can't raise taxes. Now find the money." I think they're a resourceful lot out there in the education field, trustees and others, who would have found the money. But I think this has become more political than practical. The political point being scored is, "We can't make these cuts unless we lay off teachers, and thereby the lower levels of government will force us to back down."

I fundamentally believe, with the socialist government that was last in power here, that a 10% or 15% or 20% reduction in government spending wouldn't be that difficult to come by, although it would create some firestorms across the province. That's where my criticism would lie. I believe the finances can be reduced, I believe the money is there and can be accessed. But we always end up in political debates with political wrangling, and it doesn't suit the purposes we're looking for.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the remarks of the member for Renfrew North very much. I thought they were right on the mark in so many cases. I know that through the magic of television monitors one is able to see these things.

One of the issues he addressed which I thought was rather interesting was junior kindergarten. It reminds me that contrary to what my friend the member for Etobicoke West is saying, what the government is actually doing is putting the cat among the pigeons. They are causing people to fight with one another by simply cutting way back on the funding to meet the needs of the tax cut—and we're going to have to borrow over \$20 billion, of course, to be able to implement that tax cut, which doesn't make any sense. But they've got people who support junior kindergarten fighting against those who support adult education. You've got the Catholic school

system, in some cases, confronting the public school system. You've got elementary people confronting secondary people. In other words, what you have done, essentially, is to put the cat among the pigeons and try to put the blame at the local level.

You have people lining up at the board of education door to make their case. I tell these people, "You have to go back to the game," as I've mentioned in this House before, "of pin the tail on the donkey, and in this case the donkey is sitting at Queen's Park." It is the provincial government that is responsible for what is happening, not the local board of education. If they want to make that case, that's a very valid case. I hope the people across this province, who watch this program in great numbers, will remember that, as my colleague the member for Renfrew North has reminded them.

Mr Bisson: I'd like to congratulate the member for Renfrew North for his speech here today in the House in regard to Bill 34. The member is 103% right, if there is such a thing, about what is happening in terms of the public board in Victoria-Haliburton. The member for Victoria-Haliburton, like any member trying to do his or her job, did the right thing: heard the concern of the community, heard the concern of the board and went off to the minister to lobby on their behalf. In that, he did nothing wrong. That's the job of all members.

But where it really has gone wrong is in the response the minister has made in dealing with the request from the member for Victoria-Haliburton. Rather than turn around and say, "We will treat all the school boards in some manner that is at least fair and consistent," so that if you're a constituent living in Victoria-Haliburton or a ratepayer in Metropolitan Toronto or in Timmins or Iroquois Falls you get at least the same opportunity as people in Victoria-Haliburton, what happened here, pure and simple, is that the Minister of Education has cut a deal, and he has cut a deal with the member for Victoria-Haliburton because the member for Victoria-Haliburton is feeling the heat from his constituents, he is feeling the heat from the trustees on the boards that the cuts this Minister of Education and this government have made to education are affecting classroom funding. The member for Victoria-Haliburton was trying to figure out some way to get out from the political heat. What did they do? They entered into a back room and they made a deal.

That is where the problem happens, because this Tory government is the same government that stood and said: "We are a different kind of politician. We are a type of politician that will do things differently." We're finding out that this group of Mike Harris Reformists are no different from any Tory before them, including Mike Harris and others, and are returning to what we know them for, being a bunch of politicians making backroom deals.

1750

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I welcome the opportunity to respond to the remarks by the member for Renfrew North and the member for St Catharines. Just to pick up on one piece, it was a direct criticism of the Minister of Education, but he went to say that the \$1 billion is unachievable, the savings of \$1 billion are unachievable. In fact, this really represents about a 6% reduction over two years, which I believe is achievable.

When I look at the variation in spending by boards per pupil across the province, including the Christian schools, they spend in the order of \$3,500 to \$4,000 at the low end and up to \$9,000 at the high end. Are those children getting a better education just because we spend more money? We're looking for accountable, effective and affordable education delivered in a fair way.

I might say that in my riding of Durham East there are five boards, and of those five boards, two have already committed to offering junior kindergarten. I might add that a third one is also being considered, and that's a decision that should be made by the board.

Furthermore, they're making decisions in a cost-effective way. In junior kindergarten, for example, they're saving \$320,000 on the busing component in one board alone, by offering junior kindergarten as a full-day alternate day with kindergarten.

There are decisions that can drive out-of-the-classroom costs down. The minister is trying very hard to provide accountable and affordable quality education for our children in a fair way across the province, not just in assessment-rich boards but in assessment-poor boards as well.

I believe we're on the right track and the speech today by the member recognizes some of the difficulties, certainly in the teacher component and the sick days and the other issues in Bill 34. I believe financing of education was mentioned in the Sweeney report as the primary starting point in any reforms of education.

Mr Conway: I thank my colleagues on all sides for quite good points. I want to agree with some of what the member for Durham East has said and some other nice things that have been said by other people.

There is no question we have to change the way we do business; I accept that. As a former Minister of Education, I can tell you that we come to the current situation with some people having to have gone on a diet a hell of a long time ago. I say to my friend from Etobicoke West, and I know he didn't intend it, but it's bloody insulting to be told that Rosedale and Rockcliffe Park are going to go on a diet along with Come by Chance and wherever else in Newfoundland. Rosedale and Rockcliffe Park, by the very nature of their local wealth, can afford one heck of a lot longer and different kind of a weight loss than somebody out on the hard scrabble of the Canadian Shield who has much less to start with. That's the point.

I'm not here to engage in a kind of Pat Buchanan, us-versus-them kind of fight, but I'll tell you, and some pretty bloody distinguished Progressive Conservatives like John Robarts, would that he were here, will tell you—he remembered what it was like. I'm not here to rethrash the old history, but if you come from the Ottawa Valley or if you come from northern Ontario or if you come from rural Ontario, it takes everything to hold your tongue when somebody who comes from a small postage stamp part of wonderfully urban or suburban Ontario, who's got all of this bloody industrial and commercial assessment that you have never seen, then starts to give you the lecture about how you might tighten your belt.

All we are asking for is fairness. It's no surprise to me that Chris Hodgson was making a pitch to the minister, and I suspect the members from Lennox and Addington

and other places out in the north and in the rural area are going to be making similar pitches. All I'm arguing for is fairness. I agree with the member from Durham that we have to effect some savings. I want fairness, and a key ingredient of fairness is that if there is going to be special assistance to grant-dependent boards, I want to know what the rules are and I want it widely advertised so we all know—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The time has expired. The member for Hamilton Centre, further debate.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to enter into the debate. There are only a few minutes left today in my 30 minutes, but I will begin with those comments and continue tomorrow, assuming we continue the debate on that day.

I think it was quite revealing and quite timely that on the day when we're debating Bill 34, we have the quotes over the weekend from two members of the Tory caucus.

We have maintained in the NDP caucus that the agenda here is very clear. The agenda of this government is to fund their 30% tax cut, of which they know 60% will go to those who earn the highest 10% of income in the province. We know that's why they're cutting education. Politically, we know they're hoping that by forcing the local school boards to be the ones making the decision, they will escape the heat and the blame for, quite frankly, the gutting of the education system in this province, one that, yes, needs to be improved—everything needs to be improved—but certainly what this government is doing is not improvement by any definition. It's attack, it's slash, it's gut, and they're forcing the local school boards to be the hatchet people, to take the heat.

We listen to the minister stand up in the House daily and say, "It's not our decision to be made; it's the local government making the decisions." You don't see them handing the local boards funds and saying, "You decide how to spend it, because I want you to get the glory." No, this is the opposite. They're making cuts that shouldn't be made, they're making cuts deeper than they need to be made to fund that tax cut, and they're hoping

that by standing back and forcing the school boards at the local level to make the decisions, they'll take the heat.

In three or four or five years, when this government goes back to the people—watch it; it's going to happen for sure—they're going to stand up and say: "We got the deficit under control. We're now working on the debt. We made all the tough decisions, and you ought to re-elect us so that you can have more good government like you've had." The fact of the matter is, where there's political blood spilled, they're hoping it's not theirs, it's those school trustees' blood.

As a former alderman and former regional councillor, my heart goes out to those trustees. I've met with my local trustees at the board of education and talked to them about the sorts of things they are faced with. Mr Speaker, I can tell you that every one of them, whether they're a Tory, a Liberal, a New Democrat or non-aligned, is literally sickened by the decisions that are forced on them by this government. I can tell the members in the government caucus right now, there are school board trustees watching this debate. They're watching every word, because they know the world they're living in and it's a world of Tory cuts and Tory blame, yet they're left squirming back in their own locale. Many of these people have devoted decades to their local education system. I'm going to speak more on that tomorrow when I talk about what's happening in my own home town of Hamilton.

I want to say that the comments made by the two Tory backbenchers—they're in the paper today, where we have Bill Murdoch, a veteran of this place, not a rookie, saying, "I do believe our Ministry of Education is a little out of control." A further quote from him: "I think our minister really doesn't know what he's doing—at times it seems that way." A further quote: "I think he mentioned he wanted to create a crisis—it looks like he's done that." I can't think of better words to end my comments today on than their own government members calling the minister's bluff on this game they're playing.

The Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 23 April 1996

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 23 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 avril 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): It was not so long ago when the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing promised that he would act to implement the property tax reform proposal contained in the Golden report. Back in January, the minister seemed confident of his ability to review and introduce legislation by spring with respect to the Golden task force report on GTA reform. Well, the self-imposed 90-day deadline has come and gone. By refusing to deal with this issue, the minister is breaking a fundamental promise he made last January. How soon we forget.

The principal aim of this task force was to address the inequities in the property tax base across the GTA region. It is because of these inequities that many businesses are being forced out of Metropolitan Toronto. In many instances, these businesses end up not just locating outside of Metro but, with all too great a frequency, leaving the province or, even worse, the country. Quite simply, it is precisely this lack of leadership which is costing Metro jobs and prosperity.

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I think as politicians, regardless of political party, we all would agree that one of the most distressing aspects of democratic politics in Canada is the growing alienation and cynicism that is felt by voters towards all politicians. We know that generally people have little faith in politicians and in the electoral process itself. It is clearly to our benefit to try to work to reverse that trend, and part of the problem that needs to be addressed is the question of how elections are carried out and the method we use of electing people, particularly to this Legislature.

That is why I've proposed, in a resolution to be debated later this week, that we look seriously at the notion of proportional representation as a way to deliver better, more representative and more effective government. Under this system, seats in this Legislature would be allocated to each party on the basis of the proportion of vote that it would win in an election. In Ontario, because of the diverse nature of the province, a specific number of seats would have to be set aside in each region; then seats would be allocated to each party according to the proportion of votes cast in that region.

There are many other aspects of this particular issue that I know would have to be looked at, and that is why my resolution asks that the Legislative Assembly committee be asked to look into the various models and report back to the Legislature with some recommendations. I ask people to consider that resolution and support it.

NEIGHBOURLINK

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I'd like to take the opportunity during National Volunteer Week to recognize the valiant efforts of Neighbourlink, a ministry of World Vision Canada. Throughout the week we are paying tribute to the citizens who donate their time and skills for the benefit of their communities. It is with this in mind that I tell you about Neighbourlink.

Neighbourlink was born out of World Vision Canada's concern for the world's poor. In 1990, World Vision Canada established a national programs division with the goal of establishing a Canadian expression of their global mandate to help the poor. This brought about the creation of Neighbourlink.

Neighbourlink augments the volunteer base in the community by providing a framework for a group of churches to care for people in need in very real and practical ways. They provide a structure to coordinate service agencies, church programs and volunteers with the needs of the people in the community.

There are 36 Neighbourlink ministries from Vancouver to Fredericton, 450 churches committed to the ministry and 10,000 church members volunteering their time and energy to assist their neighbours' needs.

David Adcock, the national coordinator for Neighbourlink, estimates that about 1,200 people each month are connected to caring volunteers through their organization. Some of these connections are crucial to people in need.

In Willowdale, a woman named Annie, suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and no longer able to care for her home, called Neighbourlink for help. Volunteers from the organization brought lumber to rebuild her cupboards, replacing the wiring in her home, laid new carpet, repaired storm windows, fixed the eaves and installed a new back door—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): It was revealed last month by municipal leaders in northern Ontario that the Ministry of Transportation has floated the idea of reinstating a \$66 motor vehicle registration fee on northern drivers as a means of paying for highway improvements in our part of the province. Such an idea

simply confirms that the abandonment of northern Ontario by this government continues unabated.

It has always been clear that the elimination of this motor vehicle registration fee was intended as a way of equalizing the higher costs of gasoline between northern Ontario and the south, like the 10-cent difference in gas prices between Thunder Bay and Toronto today and like the 12-cent difference in prices between Ignace or Longlac and Toronto.

If you go through with this new user fee for northerners, we will all expect a coincidental announcement that gasoline prices between northern and southern Ontarians are to be equalized immediately.

The minister has already announced a \$20-million cut to northern roads and highways. Does the minister expect that this new funding idea, which is simply a transparent bribe, will be received well by our municipal leaders as well as all other northerners, when it is clear he is simply asking us to pay for his and his colleagues' already shameful cuts to the north?

The people of northern Ontario do not trust this minister on his professed commitment on road and highway improvements. It is an insult to ask us to pay out of our own pockets for work that is clearly the responsibility of this minister and this government.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a letter from a constituent, Mr Jean-Noel Sauvé from Chelmsford. This letter is to the Ministry of Transportation, the claims department.

On March 18, Mr Sauvé and his wife had a disastrous trip from Chelmsford to Ottawa along Highway 17. Because of the horrendous condition the road was in, and still is in, they hit two potholes, causing serious damage to their car.

The first pothole caused a flat tire which destroyed the tire, a damaged rim, a damaged wheel cover and a lost wheel cover cap. Mr Sauvé changed the tire, and not too far down the road hit another pothole. This time the spare tire and the wheel were destroyed. Mr Sauvé and his wife had to backtrack to Deep River on the shoulder of the road in a damaged car and waste several hours of the trip repairing the damage.

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As a result of the terrible conditions on Highway 17 which caused the damage to the car, Mr Sauvé had to pay for the following: a used tire and rim work, \$103; a new tire in Ottawa, \$80; a new wheel in Ottawa, \$34; a new wheel cover and cap in Chelmsford, \$366; for a total of \$585.94. Mr Sauvé writes, "I am making a claim for my unforeseen expenses due to the dangerous road conditions for a total of \$585.94."

There are many roads in my riding where you simply must drive half the speed limit. To go any faster would be impossible and indeed would be dangerous.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's with great pleasure I rise to formally note to all members of the House that Sunday, April 21, marked the 70th

birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Canada. Over the years we, her loyal subjects, have come to know the Queen as the guarantor of our rights and freedoms within the framework of parliamentary democracy. We have also come to deeply appreciate the Queen's devotion to duty as our sovereign during the 44 years of her reign, as well as her understanding of and her love for the many culturally diverse peoples that comprise the nations of the Commonwealth she heads.

On May 28, 1953, Queen Elizabeth assumed, at the request of the Canadian Parliament, the title of Queen of Canada. This underscores the Queen's relationship to us as specifically our Queen. A few days later, at her coronation, the Queen also took an oath to serve us as our sovereign. This is why the Canadian citizenship oath, as well as other oaths that Canadians take to the Queen of Canada, such as our MPP oath of office, is significant as a reciprocal oath to a living person rather than to a piece of paper or an abstract idea or ideology.

At this time, we should all pause to reflect on the benefits we enjoy as Canadians and members of a constitutional monarchy. On the occasion of the 70th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Canada, may we join together as Canadians for a united expression of gratitude to our Queen for her years of loyal service to us. May our birthday gift to her at this time be our unswerving love for and loyalty to her person. It is a gift we can offer her always. God save the Queen.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Since yesterday I've been trying to get details regarding grant reductions to school boards by the Ministry of Education. My staff started, logically, in the finance division of the Ministry of Education. After two phone calls, we were informed that we must go through the minister's office, so today my staff promptly called the minister's office. Much to our surprise, we were directed to the capital and operating grants administration department. The director was not in, but his secretary referred us to the school board operating grants section. The manager was not there, but his secretary referred us to one of his policy advisers, the same adviser we spoke with on Monday. He still maintained that his orders were to route our inquiries to the minister's office. Upon hearing the little tour we had just been on through the ministry, he suggested we go back to the director of capital and operating grants administration again.

It appears that even those within the Ministry of Education are confused about what is going on, where information exists and who has access to it and from whom. If there is a new set of rules for getting information from the ministry, please be so kind as to share it with us, the members of the Legislature.

CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): On a number of occasions, I have raised the plight of a group of defiant cleaners who work here at Queen's Park cleaning offices, most of whom are Portuguese Canadian

women, who became some of the first victims of the government's anti-worker Bill 7. I'm pleased to stand here today and say to this House that the workers who remained and those who were hired on have signed union cards and have voted over 90% to recertify the union this government forced out.

Members of the House will recall that for years this union was entitled to be maintained in any bidding contracts that were put out. That right was etched in law in our previous legislation, rights which this government took away under Bill 7 and left these workers with absolutely no rights; in fact they terminated 30 employees, with absolutely no regard for seniority. We know those who remained had a cut in pay of 30% from what they were getting beforehand, before this government brought in its anti-worker Bill 7.

This says very clearly to this government that working people understand your agenda. Your agenda is to cut and slash to pay for that tax cut and it's to attack the labour movement. Here's the evidence: You're not going to break the labour movement in Ontario.

EDDIE SARGENT

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Port Elgin has Pumpkinfest, Kitchener-Waterloo has Oktoberfest, Wiarton still has Wiarton Willy, and now, thanks to the imagination of 11-year-old Eddie Sargent, Owen Sound has the distinction of being the host to the world's largest Easter egg hunt.

I would like to congratulate young Eddie Sargent, whose vision and hard work brought a community together in a concerted effort to break the world record for the number of Easter eggs collected.

On Easter Sunday, Eddie signalled the start of the world's largest egg hunt by announcing to a crowd of over 3,000 children, parents and volunteers that 355,000 candy eggs were waiting to be discovered, a total nearly triple the previous record in the Guinness Book of Records.

How did Eddie do it? One egg at a time. In response to Eddie's quest for the record, community groups, seniors, businesses, executives and, yes, even politicians contributed eggs. Egg donations poured in from as far away as Michigan, Vancouver and Florida.

I am sure Eddie's grandfather, long-standing Liberal member of provincial Parliament Eddie Sargent, is justifiably proud of his grandson's vision. As former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism, Eddie Sargent made great strides for tourism in Grey-Owen Sound. Perhaps young Eddie is already following in his footsteps, as the Easter egg hunt could be the beginning of a great tradition and a tourist attraction for the city.

Congratulations, Eddie Sargent.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SAFE COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I was pleased to participate this morning in the launch of the Safe Communities Foundation here in the city of Toronto.

This is an organization with a very innovative, community-based program to help make Ontario the safest place to live, work and play in the world. The ultimate goal is to work with safety organizations and individuals to eliminate workplace injuries.

I would like to congratulate Paul Kells. Paul Kells is the founder of the Safe Communities Foundation, the man who made this launch possible today.

Paul Kells has become an inspiration to every one of us who is concerned about health and safety. He has worked tirelessly with his family to promote and champion the importance of safety in the workplace, with special emphasis on the education of our young workers. He has done this ever since the tragic death of his son Sean, which happened in a very preventable workplace accident in Sean's third day on the job in a new part-time job in November 1994.

This afternoon my colleague the Honourable Bob Runciman will be involved in the launch of the pilot community program in Brockville. Brockville is the first community of what is hoped will be at least five Ontario communities to participate in the Safe Communities Foundation.

I would like to congratulate the mayor and members of the Brockville community, the employers, the employees and the schools, for their enthusiastic participation in this program. They have set the goal of eliminating accidents by 50% over the next two years. We know this is achievable because in the community of High River, Alberta, where this program has been operational, they have managed to reduce injuries by 66% in one year. That's what happens when caring communities work together.

Last year, 52 people were killed in Ontario and 813 suffered serious critical injuries. The tragedy is that most of these deaths and injuries do not have to happen; they are preventable. And that is what we intend to do. We intend to work cooperatively to prevent deaths and injury.

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The Ministry of Labour is pleased to be involved in this unique private-public sector partnership with the foundation and the private sector in helping communities prevent and reduce injuries. As a government we will provide the technical support and the expertise and the Deputy Minister of Labour will sit on the foundation board. In addition, the Workers' Compensation Board will become an important partner in the safe communities initiative as it works to develop the appropriate programs.

I would also like to congratulate the Bank of Nova Scotia, the Bank of Montreal, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the Toronto-Dominion Bank and the Royal Bank of Canada, which are the founding sponsors of the foundation, as well as Du Pont Canada Inc and Noranda Inc, which are the first corporate sponsors. They are providing all the funding.

The Safe Communities Foundation represents an important step forward in our collective effort to create the safest workplaces in the world. Again I congratulate Paul Kells, his family and all those individuals who are working cooperatively in this exciting new endeavour to prevent and reduce injuries and deaths in Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand up and congratulate Paul Kells and the Safe Communities Foundation for

taking the tragedy and grief associated with the death of young Sean Kells and turning them into the beginning of a positive venture.

We also have to thank the corporate sponsors that have helped to make this project a reality and thank the community of Brockville. Finally, I want to thank Mr Kells, his family and the association for keeping myself and our caucus abreast of the developments associated with this and how it's been coming along. We're proud to welcome that.

I say to the Minister of Labour that we are thankful that groups like this are intervening and beginning to take up the slack resulting from the cuts this government has made across a whole range of labour issues.

This minister has a number of firsts to her credit. She's the first labour minister to introduce significant changes to the Labour Relations Act without public hearings; she's the first labour minister whom organized labour will not consult with; she's the first labour minister who would not address the annual meeting of the provincial building trades council; she's the first labour minister to reduce spending and services associated with health and safety. She spoke of her ministry providing technical support. She forgets that she's eliminating all of the laboratories within her ministry. This is the first labour minister who has taken steps backwards, in our view, in the whole area of health and safety. I will predict that this will be the first labour minister who will significantly reduce benefits to injured workers.

While we recognize the importance of community-based efforts in addressing health and safety, and I remind the minister that the safe communities document itself points out the dramatic savings associated with expenditures in health and safety, I must say that it takes more than just words; it takes more than the arrogance associated with this government, where they won't even listen in the House or in the community to issues of importance. I will also predict that this government's cavalier attitude towards injured workers and towards labour and health and safety issues in the workplace will ultimately cost this government. We'll be talking on Thursday about abysmal records associated with health and safety, about fatalities in the workplace. It's time that the government begins to recognize its responsibilities in the area of health and safety.

It's most unfortunate that the predictions we made last year are coming true, that the rate of labour unrest in this province is increasing. The days lost to strikes and work action are increasing. It has a tremendous impact on the investment climate, which we too want to see improved. It is our view and the opinion of our caucus that we have to work to restore labour harmony and bring about a sense of investor confidence, as the government does, but we don't think you do that by creating a labour climate that isn't conducive to investment.

We will see in the weeks and months ahead more problems associated not only with this announcement but with other announcements in terms of compensation for injured workers. The government is about to embark on a massive overhaul of benefits to injured workers that are going to effectively penalize those people in order to try and bring about changes that they think are important but frankly we think they are blowing way out of proportion.

It's our view that if the Minister of Labour was as committed to health and safety in the workplace as her words seem to indicate, we would see dramatic savings in costs associated with WCB for employers and most importantly for injured workers.

People like Mr Kells and the Safe Communities Foundation are to be congratulated. We applaud them and we look forward to continuing to work with them on initiatives that will improve not only the health and safety of our workplaces but indeed of our communities overall. So we welcome that intervention and we ask the Minister of Labour to please take the steps that are important and necessary to ensure healthier and safer workplaces in the province of Ontario.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I don't think there was an Ontarian to speak of who was not significantly moved by the tragic death of young Sean Kells, and we certainly acknowledge the efforts of his father, Mr Paul Kells, in trying to derive something positive from such a tragedy. We salute that effort and we salute the effort of any citizen and for that matter any corporation that cares about the plight of workers and their health and safety in the workplace.

But I think the people of Ontario will understand some of the concern and, quite frankly, cynicism that the labour movement has with regard to initiatives that this Minister of Labour brings forward when we take a look at what her agenda and her track record have been so far. My colleague from the Liberal Party has mentioned some of them; I want to mention a few others as well as emphasize some that have been mentioned because of their importance.

First of all, let's recognize that while this government and this minister stand up on a regular basis and talk and pay lip-service to health and safety for workers, every action to date that they have taken is to either take away rights that workers have or take away systems, procedures, supports and even laws that protect those very same workers. At the end of the day, people will not be fooled by empty words.

This minister is presiding over the virtual gutting of the Ministry of Labour. This is the minister who has announced that she is also going to open up the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That has been done in the context of saving money, of cuts. We know that when this minister opens up a piece of legislation, workers are going to lose some right or some protection somewhere. We know that with the Jackson report to gut the WCB, the purpose is to take away benefits from workers who are already innocently injured on the job. And the purpose of taking away those benefits? So that they can save more money. That goes into the pot to pay for a 30% tax cut. It all flows into that. There are \$40 million coming out of the Ministry of Labour, and a large part of that is going to find its way into the pockets of the very wealthy in our province who stand to benefit the most from this tax cut.

1400

This is also the same minister who killed the Workplace Health and Safety Agency and took us back decades and put health and safety and injury prevention back into the WCB after it had been taken out of there,

recognizing it wasn't being given the priority effort it should. This minister is also eliminating the Joint Steering Committee on Hazardous Substances in the Workplace and has cut the training for employers and employees from 120 hours to 56 hours.

There is nothing in the agenda of this government as it relates to workers that has not taken away a right or a protection that workers have earned, that workers deserve and that workers are entitled to, and on April 28, the day of mourning in the province of Ontario, I say this Minister of Labour ought to hang her head in shame for what she has done to workers in this province.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, you will be aware that approximately a year ago, the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada that monitors the safety of our nuclear plants reported its growing concerns about the safety of our nuclear facilities, and was particularly concerned about a valve problem which could lead to problems with safety.

Last December the Pickering nuclear station was given a go-ahead on its operating licence because supposedly the problems had been fixed. Yesterday there was an absolutely unprecedented shutdown of the Pickering nuclear facility after what was a supposedly routine inspection. Minister, your assurance that there is no problem is simply not good enough. There is a problem when the federal agency has a concern about nuclear safety. There is a problem when a plant is shut down where the problem was supposedly fixed last December.

Minister, don't just tell us there is no problem. Tell us what happened at Pickering that caused the shutdown of that plant.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): What I can say to you is that safety is a first priority of both Ontario and of this government. I can say to you that in routine inspection and maintenance of the Pickering plant, a faulty valve was discovered. It was felt the most appropriate way to deal with this was to shut the plant to make sure the repairs could be conducted in a safe manner, and that is exactly what was done.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, you will be aware that Pickering has not been terribly reassured by your answers: "Not to worry. Everything is being handled. It's all routine. There is no cause for alarm." The mayor of Pickering is concerned that on a problem that occurred just a short time ago, they were not notified for some 14 hours and then they were told: "Don't worry. There is no problem now."

We are concerned here about some very fundamental issues of public safety and public concern about the safety of our nuclear facilities in this province. It is simply not enough for you to say there is no problem and give everybody, from the mayor of Pickering to the members of this Legislature to the public of Ontario, a reassuring pat on the head. You have a report, a report

which was done on the safety of our nuclear facilities. You were asked last November if you would make that report public. I ask you again today, will you make that report on the safety of our nuclear facilities public so we can all know if there is no problem?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Firstly, I'm not saying there wasn't a problem; I'm saying in fact there was a problem. It was detected during routine maintenance, which is exactly where we would want to find it, if there ever was a problem. As soon as it was detected and determined how best to deal with the circumstance, then the plant was shut down to best repair the valve in the backup system.

With regard to the peer reviews, these are reviews that are conducted every two years and have been conducted for almost 10 years. The confidentiality of these is important to the efficacy of the report. In order for them to work, over the past 10 years they have always remained confidential.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, the answer simply has no credibility; it simply isn't good enough. You can't stand here in this place today and tell us that the Pickering nuclear plant was taken through an unprecedented shutdown of the entire complex as a result of a routine maintenance inspection and that there's no reason to be concerned, there's no problem. The federal monitoring agency said a year ago that it was concerned about the safety of the nuclear plants. They believed there was a problem and they believed the problem needed to be fixed. You have a study that would tell us once and for all whether there is a problem and, if there is a problem, what you're doing about the problem. The public has a right to know. They have a right to reassurance that is based on fact, on an understanding of what the problems are and what you're doing to fix them. What have you got to hide? Why will you not release that report now?

Hon Mrs Elliott: If I became aware of a problem that was not being addressed, believe you me, this government would act. We are proud of the fact that Ontario Hydro took immediate action to deal with the problem. Since these reports have been conducted every two years for 10 years, why didn't the members of either opposition party deliver these to the public?

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I move with some reluctance from the Minister of Energy's non-answer to the Minister of Education and his non-answers from yesterday. Yesterday the Minister of Education removed any questions that we had about his ability to get the job done in education. With all due respect, it is now absolutely clear that it is the children of this province who are paying the price for your incompetence in your ministry.

If you knew what you were doing, why would you have been about to cut 50% of a board's budget, as you were about to do in Haliburton, without knowing the havoc it would create in the classroom? If you knew what you were doing, how is it that you could have created a special emergency fund and not tell anybody about it—even the officials in your own ministry apparently—not have any criteria for its use and not even know it existed

until after yesterday's question period? How is that possible if you knew what you were doing?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'm surprised by both the tone and the nature of the question, because I believe this question was addressed yesterday, but I will address it again for you today. As I would have thought the member would have known, there are a great number of factors involved in the general legislative grants, among those change in assessment, change in student enrolment, the effects of the permanent social contract savings in the boards and of course the effect of our announcement of something less than 2% of board spending for next year. In combination this may have, particularly on smaller boards from place to place, what we would call and what is known as an undue burden. In these circumstances, governments in the past have applied regulation 307 of the Education Act to make sure that student services could be provided on an equitable basis by all boards in the province.

I am, again, very surprised at the nature of the question, because regulation 307 has been applied over 30 times in the last decade, so it's a very common use. My understanding is, if I can just use a couple of examples, that in 1989 the Ottawa-Carleton board was given an undue burden grant of \$2.7 million, and in 1993 the Windsor Board of Education was given an \$802,000 undue burden grant. I suspect the members from those areas represented their areas well.

Mrs McLeod: I'm not surprised that you've come into the House today with somewhat more information than you were able to provide us with yesterday. You will remember that yesterday I asked you to tell us what special consideration, what special deal had been made with the Haliburton board. You said there was no deal at all. Later in the day you said that indeed there had been some special consideration and you would review your 10% overall grants to the school boards of this province, and you would make sure that everybody was treated fairly. Minister, it's unbelievable that you would have to review something that you had just done the previous week, because you had no idea what you had done. You had no idea what your cuts were and you had no idea what effect they were having on boards.

1410

You certainly didn't know what was happening in Haliburton, where your revolution was about to leave the Haliburton board absolutely reeling with a 50% cut to its funding, and your colleague the Minister of Natural Resources had no choice but to come to you in desperation and ask for some special consideration.

Minister, how could that have possibly made it past your desk: the very idea that you'd hit a board like Haliburton with a 50% cut without your knowing about it and knowing the consequences? Why did you have to cut a special deal with your colleague the Minister of Natural Resources and who else have you cut this special deal with?

Hon Mr Snobelen: To the honourable member opposite, I am surprised at the nature of the question because I would've thought that the honourable member opposite would've known the nature of the general legislative grants, having had the experience in the House

that she has had. I would've thought she would've known that the normal process is to send out, in draft form, the GLG regulations, to confirm enrolment numbers and assessment bases with boards. When boards feel there's an undue burden, they approach the ministry and ask for relief, and we will respond to that.

I can assure the member opposite that this government is concerned about making sure there's an equitable base of funding across the province, that we will address these circumstances, particularly with small boards, because we want to make sure that they can in fact apply these savings to their circumstances. So we will review that very carefully in advance of next year's grant formula in the normal process that has taken place in this province for over 20 years.

Mrs McLeod: This year. It's what you did last week that we're worried about. It's the fact that you were about to hit the Haliburton board of education with a 50% cut that they couldn't possibly have coped with, that it was up to your colleague the Minister of Natural Resources to come to you desperately to say, "Minister, we've got a problem, and you've got to fix the problem." You didn't know what was happening. You still don't know what was happening. You're still not prepared to tell us who else this week, as of now, has had some special consideration like the consideration that the Haliburton board got.

Minister, in the course of this week, you have been accused of having lied about cuts not affecting classroom education. You've been accused of being out of whack and out of control, and that's just what your friends are saying. It's clear that the crisis the Minister of Education used to talk about creating has happened, Minister, and the crisis is you. It is your performance that is the crisis, and your complete failure to understand what is happening to boards because of your cuts is the crisis.

Minister, you've created the crisis; you can help to solve it. Tell us today, straight information, the name of every school board that you have cut a deal with, that you've reviewed and fixed the problem in the last week. Tell us which members of your cabinet have been lobbying you to give their school board a special deal. Tell us how many secret funds you have at your disposal to fix the problems that you've created and, most of all, tell us when you intend to start acting with some semblance of competence, or when you'll step down.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for both the excellent question and for the tone of the question, which was conciliatory, of course, and what we've come to expect in the House.

I have answered this question repeatedly over the last two days, and I hope perhaps the member opposite will listen carefully: There has been no deal cut with any board. The ministry, in the normal course of sending out draft general legislative grants and reviewing both the assessment base and the student enrolment base, particularly with small boards, which is the normal process, the process that's gone on government to government, year to year, for next year's grants, we will be going through that process of review. We are going through that process of review.

I can assure the member opposite—I'm sure she'll be interested in hearing this—that we will make absolutely

certain that boards of education, particularly the small boards which don't have as much room to manoeuvre in their budgets as larger boards do, that we'll make sure those boards are treated equitably and fairly. Once we have confirmed their enrolment with them, once we have confirmed their assessment base with them, we will do what is necessary to make sure they can operate a sound school system for the next year. I want to assure the member opposite of that.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the third party, the leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I hope the minister is going to clarify this to the Haliburton County Echo so that they can straighten out what was the error.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. It's in regard to the comments made by Mayor Wayne Arthurs, who expressed concern about how long it took for Pickering council to be notified of the tritium heavy water spill last week and then the emergency cooling system problems that led to the shutdown at Pickering.

Minister, the coolant system problem was discovered on Tuesday. The plant manager, Pierre Charlebois, met with the Pickering Ontario Hydro liaison committee, which is made up of municipal council members and residents, on Thursday, yet at that meeting, which was to deal with Pickering safety issues, Mr Charlebois did not mention what had occurred at Pickering two days previous. Could the minister explain why Ontario Hydro withheld that information from the very community committee that is supposed to deal with safety problems around the Pickering nuclear plant?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I believe I answered this question as well as I could in the House last week. I did acknowledge that we had not been properly informed by Ontario Hydro with regard to this. I did indicate at that time that I had sent a letter to the chair of Ontario Hydro expressing our concerns and wanting to be assured that the protocol that had been established in the fall was properly followed. I, in fact, did receive assurance from the chair of Ontario Hydro that there had been an acknowledgement that that protocol had not been properly followed and an assurance that that would not occur ever again.

Mr Wildman: That was assurance to you, as minister, that you'd be notified, as you certainly should be. Do you have any assurance that the local liaison committee that has been set up to deal specifically with these problems at Pickering will also be notified in a timely fashion, rather than the kinds of delays that were experienced last week, that is, that the public will get the information they need, the full story of the state of Ontario Hydro's nuclear plant safety?

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): She got the same assurances.

Mr Wildman: With regard to the peer review audit that was asked about yesterday and previously, and here again today, the minister says she doesn't want to give out the information because that might mean that people

participating in the peer review will not be candid. Can she at least make a commitment to black out whatever names and identifications are in there and give us the information? If the information is clear that there are not serious problems, it will reassure the public. Surely the minister would want to reassure the public about the safety at Ontario nuclear plants. Why won't you publish the peer review report?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Again, I must reassure everyone that the faulty valve was discovered during routine maintenance checks. Ontario Hydro determined that the best way to solve and to repair this was to shut the plant.

My colleague across the way will understand peer reviews. As I said earlier, they are done every second year and have been done so for 10 years. Whether it relates to nuclear facilities or health reviews, the integrity of that whole process, the confidentiality, is absolutely fundamental for a full and candid discussion among peers to occur so that their recommendations can be fully discussed and appropriate measures taken.

Mr Wildman: Doesn't the minister understand that what the members of this House are concerned about and the members of the public are concerned about is the integrity and safety of the nuclear system, of Ontario Hydro, in the province? If the minister understands that, and she also acknowledges that the chair of Ontario Hydro, Mr Farlinger, is going around talking about his desire to privatize the nuclear parts of Ontario Hydro as well as other generating systems, isn't the minister concerned that a private operator of nuclear plants might be tempted to cut corners on safety in order to save money? And if that is the case, with the debate on privatization just now beginning, why won't the minister assure the public of the integrity of the nuclear system by publishing this report?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I can assure all citizens of this province that the safety of nuclear generation in this province is very, very important to this government, as it is to every citizen. My colleague across the way was the Minister of Energy and didn't ever release any of those peer review reports.

The safety of all nuclear plants is not governed by Ontario Hydro; it's governed by the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada. That is a governing agency that determines the safety operations that must be adhered to in the operation of any nuclear facility, private or public.

1420

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy as well. We understand that this government's agenda is to sell off many of Ontario's most valuable public assets. What concerns us is your chair of Ontario Hydro has been touring the world telling people that he believes Ontario Hydro's nuclear generating stations should be sold off as well. I want to ask the minister, will you confirm that you are not in favour of privatizing Ontario Hydro's nuclear stations?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): What we have determined is that Ontario Hydro

is facing some tremendous challenges with regard to the cost of the electricity it must produce. Our job as a government is to attempt to determine how best to ensure Ontario Hydro's stability and the affordability of its rates.

Mr Hampton: What I find interesting is that this Minister of Environment, who's supposed to be charged with protecting the environment and the safety of Ontarians, talks about profitability and talks about manageability. Nowhere is there mention of safety.

Let me ask the minister again. I put to you a simple question: Will you take a stand? Are you opposing the sale of Ontario Hydro's nuclear stations? People in this province are worried about the issue of safety with respect to the nuclear generating stations. Your chair of Ontario Hydro says he's in favour of selling the nuclear generating stations to private companies. Are you in favour of that? Are you opposed to it? Will you take a position?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Just for the record, the safe operation of any nuclear facility in this province is very important to this government, as it is to every citizen in this province, first and foremost. Secondly, we have not made a determination what we are about to do with Ontario Hydro, if anything.

We are trying to determine how best to ensure Ontario Hydro's affordable rates for the future. It is important to the competitiveness of this province. Low energy rates are vital to keeping business in this province, and we recognize that and how important it is for the job creation agenda of this government. It matters to us. Ontario Hydro is now facing a \$32-billion debt. It's important that we consider all of these factors in what we attempt to do with Ontario Hydro to keep it a strong, profitable and viable corporation.

Mr Hampton: Let me try again and let me quote for the minister some information from the Wall Street Journal, that bastion of privatization. What the article in the Wall Street Journal says is that in the United States people are becoming increasingly worried about the safety of nuclear plants owned by private companies in the United States, because to save costs private utilities are already running nuclear plants longer and harder, in part by reducing the number of days they are taken out of service for refuelling. People are worried about the safety of nuclear plants. Are you prepared here and now, today, to rule out the privatization of the nuclear generating stations? Certainly in the United States it's becoming a very big safety issue. Will you rule that out?

Hon Mrs Elliott: We of the government, on behalf of the people of Ontario, are committed to the safe operation of all nuclear facilities in this province.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): A new question to the Minister of Environment and Energy about the situation at Pickering last week and this. Minister, a very serious development occurred last week at the nuclear station at Pickering. We have an unprecedented shutdown of all the units at Pickering. That's never happened before.

Eight days ago, there was a leak of tritiated water. It was more than four days later before the shutdown was

indicated to the mayor of the community. This comes after a number of very serious concerns that have been identified by the federal regulator, and I'm not going to trot them out here, but in recent years the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada has said it is increasingly concerned about the deteriorating safety ethic and standard at Ontario Hydro's nuclear power stations.

I want to know, Minister, what you have to say to the people of Pickering and Durham region about why it was more than four days before they and their community leadership were notified about what was happening at that large nuclear station in Pickering.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): The plant is now shut down as a precautionary measure by Ontario Hydro. I think I would be more concerned as a citizen, if a faulty valve had been detected in the safety backup system, if nothing had occurred. There are nine people from the Atomic Energy Control Board of Canada now onsite, very pleased with the remediation work being undertaken by Ontario Hydro at this site.

Mr Conway: Almost a year before the incident last week, the federal regulator, the Atomic Energy Control Board, wrote about Pickering, copies of which information you and your department have had for months because this letter is dated August 11, 1995—I'm quoting now from the AECB letter to Mr Charlebois from last August:

"There have recently been a significant number of serious events at both Pickering A and B, leading us"—the AECB—"to question Ontario Hydro's nuclear effectiveness in maintaining a satisfactory level of safety."

That letter was written almost a year before last week's incident. The record is clear and it's becoming clearer every week. Ontario Hydro is slipping, and slipping seriously, in its maintenance of an appropriate safety standard at places like Pickering.

You offer us platitudes about the government's concern and what the government is doing. I submit to you today that you have done nothing between last August and last week to satisfy the people of Durham region specifically and the people of Ontario generally that this slippage in safety standard at Ontario Hydro's nuclear power stations is being arrested. I ask again, what are you prepared to say to the mayor and the people of Pickering about this AECB concern, which has been on the record now for months, beyond the kinds of pious and pointless platitudes you've offered here today?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I find this a confusing position to answer, from this point of view: On one hand the member opposite is accusing us of doing nothing, and on the other hand he's accusing us of overreacting by closing the Pickering plant to repair the faulty valve. I put to him that if he wants the valve repaired we must take the appropriate measures, and Ontario Hydro, to its credit, has done so.

1430

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. Yesterday in the House we had discussion about special deals the minister

was apparently offering certain boards in the province that were experiencing undue burdens as a result of the reductions in grants from his ministry to boards this year and his indication that those reductions might be capped at a certain percentage of last year's funding.

Frankly, as a result of the cuts that have been made by this government to the legislative grants for boards across Ontario this year, all the boards in Ontario could argue that they are facing undue burden. As a result of that, I've written to the boards, suggesting as the minister did yesterday, I think, that the boards should apply for undue burden grants to help them deal with these cuts that have been announced by the minister.

With that in mind, could the minister please explain to us what the criteria are for determining which boards will be eligible for undue burden grants as a result of the cuts in transfer payments from this government to boards like the Haliburton County Board of Education?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the leader of the third party for the question. Although it's very similar to questions that I answered yesterday, I'm pleased to address the question again today. I'm pleased to inform the member opposite, about the example that came forward yesterday of a board that apparently, from the information that came from across the floor, was going to experience a reduction of about \$1.2 million in funding, that \$200,000 of that \$1.2 million relates to actions of this government and \$1 million of that number relates to the consequences of actions of his government when it was in power. I'm surprised that he had not a more profound understanding of those numbers.

Mr Wildman: Are we to understand, from the minister's response, that the particular board to which he was referring, Haliburton county, will receive assistance this year with its funding problems as a result of the changes in grants from the provincial government? If it isn't for this year, can he explain why his colleague apparently informed the local board and the public meeting that this was going to happen? Further, can the minister explain why there are rampant rumours that other boards have applied for undue burden grants for this year, such as the West Parry Sound Board of Education in the Minister of Finance's riding?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm very glad to answer that question of the honourable member opposite. I can tell him what I told the Leader of the Opposition a few moments ago, that since we have sent out the draft GLGs, based on our projections of enrolment, based on our projections of assessment, we will get back the information from the boards, which is a normal course of events, by the way, we'll get back from them their sense of assessment, their sense of enrolment, and then we will work with them, particularly with small boards, boards with a small enrolment base which don't have as many opportunities to reduce costs outside of the classroom, which is our commitment to the people of Ontario.

If the member opposite wants some better understanding of a special-purpose grant and how it's applied, perhaps he could ask the member for Windsor-Riverside, who was involved I know in his government as a cabinet minister. The Windsor Board of Education received a

special-burden grant in 1993 of \$802,000. I'm sure that member, at least, understands how this process works.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): My question this afternoon is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, I read with great interest last month's series in the Toronto Star regarding issues of spousal abuse. This issue is a very serious one, not only to my constituents but to society as a whole. As elected representatives, we have a moral duty to address this issue.

In your capacity as minister responsible for women's issues, how are the priorities in your business plan addressing this issue?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I'd like to thank the member for the question and also to compliment the Toronto Star for the excellent research it did with regard to this issue.

The number one priority of our business plan this year, as the members know, is the development of a provincial framework to promote community safety initiatives to assist in the prevention of violence against women. As other governments before us have made this a priority, we are continuing with the work they have done and are building on it.

This government spends almost \$100 million to prevent violence against women; that budget has increased from some \$5 million to \$100 million in the last 10 years. We're very interested in accountability for the spending and the helpfulness of the programs the women receive, and the prevention and education programs that go along with them. As such, we intend to examine the effectiveness, and we are in program delivery for the women. This is our priority and will remain our priority in the year to come.

Mrs Fisher: We all recognize that this province is in a period of serious fiscal restraint and that difficult decisions must be made about where we spend the limited provincial funds we have. Have any cuts been made to front-line services for abused women in the recent estimates announcement made by the Chair of the Management Board?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Right off the top in answer to that question about the recent estimates announcements by the Chair of Management Board, there will be no reductions to programs that support women who have been the victims of violence—none at all. Some of the members opposite may be somewhat concerned about that, but we all recognize the seriousness of the situation facing abused women in Ontario.

We have been most pleased with the response of the communities with regard to our Ontario reduction targets in the summer. Many of the communities have come together to share services; that's exactly what we intended and exactly how they responded. It's our intent always to do better with less, and we're delivering upon this promise we made to the citizens of Ontario last summer.

I also have to say that I've worked closely with my colleagues in the eight other ministries responsible for the violence initiatives to ensure that we would stay the course on providing the essential front-line services. You

should all be very proud to tell your constituents that we have cut only in administrative areas.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. This morning the Ontario Secondary School Principals' Council took the highly unusual step of publicly voicing their concerns over the direction this government is taking on secondary school reform. I'm sure you've been notified and briefed on their press conference. They have joined the long list of people who say that your policies are hurting students, hurting the quality of education, in fact lowering educational standards.

This is what they had to say this morning: "In spite of offering assistance very early in the process, the Ontario Secondary School Principals' Council and their local parent associations have been ignored." An unusual step for this group to take, you'll have to admit.

Why have you ignored the principals and the parents in their offer to help, number one; and why are you moving ahead without any regard to the advice of those people responsible for implementing the secondary school program?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for the question. I believe in the same press conference this morning the principals who were gathered had some rather complimentary things to say about some of the things they have been hearing that are coming forward from an advisory council we put together, for the member's information, of people involved in the education community—directors of education, teachers and other people involved in the education community—to form an advisory committee to this government about secondary school reform.

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Our commitment to secondary school reform remains the same, and that is to have a program of excellence for those who are exiting to university but also to have a program that addresses the very real needs of the 60% or so of students who will go out to the world of work after high school. We think a relevant, high-standard secondary school program needs to be put together, and we are using an advisory body to put together a draft document for that purpose. Once that draft document is ready, we will of course be consulting with educators and with parents before implementation.

Mr Patten: You continually say that you consult, that you visit schools, that you've heard the opinions of people in the field. I suppose it means many people feel that you're not listening.

This past weekend I had the good fortune to meet with over 100 principals and vice-principals not far from your region. Many of them had grave concerns about what they had read in the draft document, the content, and the process in particular, especially knowing that we're talking about an implementation phase of perhaps a little over a year, grave concerns with the upheavals that are presently going on in the educational system to revamp the program for six years, from grade 12 to grade 7.

They're deeply, deeply horrified at the prospect of the kind of upheaval that will take place.

Minister, why do you think these principals had to take this rather courageous and unusual step to speak out?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe that in a system where there are some 130,000 or more teachers, a large number of principals, a large number of school boards, over 160 school boards in this province, two million children, two million young people who are in our schools, there are a variety of opinions within that structure and a variety of organizations.

I'm glad the member opposite mentioned the fact that I as minister have attempted to get out to as many of those schools as I can. I've spent about 25% of my time doing that, talking to principals, talking to educators, about the reforms that are needed in our school system.

I want to remind the member opposite that there has been no draft release by the advisory council. As far as I know, that is still being worked on. When it is released, we will consult widely in the education community to get the best advice from the education community on how to make these needed changes in our education system. But I want to remind the member opposite that these reforms are necessary for our education system, for our young people in the province of Ontario. This is a reform that was recommended by the Hall-Dennis report. This is a recommendation of the most recent royal commission. This is a change that needs to happen in education in Ontario, and with this government in power, this change will happen.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines. I'm glad to see you here for question period because since April 11, when you gutted the MNR, you only showed up once last week.

With each passing day it's become more and more clear that you have no idea what the cuts are doing to communities in northern Ontario. You know nothing about the impact of these cuts on local economies in these 12 communities.

I'm going to give you an example. In Cochrane, the relocation of the MNR regional office is going to cost the community of 4,500 people 42 jobs. Thirty families will be affected. It will take \$2 million out of the annual economy of Cochrane. That's like cutting 20,000 jobs out of Metro and taking \$978 million in annual income out of the Metro economy.

David Hughes, the mayor of Cochrane, says: "This is like a slap in the face. We could have at least expected some sort of discussion, especially about an announcement like this." The town of Cochrane is repeatedly asking for a meeting with you, and your office tells them it will take three to four weeks. The jobs will be gone by then. We have over 500 letters asking for meetings with the Minister of Natural Resources.

Minister, you are doing this to small communities all over northern Ontario and then you had the nerve to stand up in this House last week and make a stupid, arrogant remark about showing favouritism to the north.

Can you tell the people of these communities who are losing their jobs, who know what it's like to be evacuated from their homes because of the forest fires and now watch in disbelief as you cut fire protection, why they should be so appreciative of your favouritism to northern Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question. I disagree with the premise and the tone. No one takes a great deal of pleasure in seeing the operations of the Ontario government having to be downsized, but there is a reality that has to be faced, that we're preserving the essential services in Ontario so we can have sustainable government. We're also organizing the ministry on a functional basis so it will provide better future service.

The consolidation of offices is a message we have heard from the public throughout the province, and that is, let's try to leave intact the core function, the front-line services that help people. If we can find ways to deliver services more effectively by reducing administration and overhead, those are the areas that should be looked at first. On the office consolidation we're moving from four regions to three. The regional office in Cochrane will be moved to Timmins; there will still be a district office there. I will be talking to the community. We've got an extremely busy schedule and we're trying to arrange something.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Last Wednesday, my colleague from Sudbury East asked you a question about the 2,200 jobs being hacked from northern Ontario in your ministry. You made a very strange and I must say smug remark about how you are showing favouritism to the north, even though 45% of the job losses are being absorbed by less than 10% of the population in this province, which is a very strange remark for a Minister of Northern Development to make.

You have cut more than 1,000 jobs in northern Ontario, you're closing 11 fire bases in northern Ontario, you've killed norOntair, you're turning control of the crown forests over to the private sector, and you've chopped northern highway budgets.

I have to ask you, Minister, how can you continue to sit at the cabinet table when you're not representing the interests of northern Ontario? That those of us from northern Ontario want you to step down from both your responsibilities for natural resources and for northern development, because, I'll tell you, we would prefer benign neglect to the wilful destruction in which you're engaged these days.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The question referred to that I had last Wednesday was in regard to the MNR and its reductions in staffing. In the northern development ministry, we're monitoring this. You mentioned the abandonment of the north and you used norOntair as an example. The Timmins editorial from last week talks about the success of the private air carriers into the small communities in northern Ontario. They're bragging about that. This is an option that saves the government that was subsidizing this, the taxpayers of Ontario who were subsidizing it, along with the ONTC, subsidizing the air service in the north, over \$5 million. By allowing the sale

of that to go through, \$14 million is reinvested into the ONTC for future economic development opportunities in northern Ontario. I think that's a success story.

TAXATION

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I understand the federal government has undertaken to harmonize the GST with three Atlantic provinces. Why is Ontario not part of this deal?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): As I've indicated in the House previously on this issue, Ontario is not interested in transferring \$2 billion a year in taxes to consumers in the province of Ontario. Under the federal proposal of harmonization at 15%, this would expand the base that's charged on such items that are now not taxed at 15%; for example, electricity, home heating, children's clothing, books, new houses, real estate fees—they would all be taxed under the new combined tax. In the housing sector alone, that would mean an additional \$900 million a year to Ontario consumers. On a house that's valued at \$250,000, that's \$6,000 in extra taxes. A family that earns between \$30,000 and \$40,000 a year would pay an additional \$185 a year as a result of that harmonization proposal. We're not interested in raising taxation rates for Ontario consumers; we're interested in lowering taxation rates.

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Mr Stewart: I understand the federal government will subsidize the Atlantic provinces to the tune of something like \$961 million over four years. Will Ontario tax dollars be used to subsidize this arrangement?

Hon Mr Eves: You'd have to ask the federal Minister of Finance that question. Everybody knows the province of Ontario contributes about 41% of the revenues going to the federal government, so I guess if you wanted to use that theory, it could be argued that Ontarians will be subsidizing this \$960 million to the tune of almost \$400 million. I don't think that's appropriate. If the federal government decides it wants to offer a subsidy of \$960 million to three provinces, it should use its own money, not the province of Ontario's money.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMUNICATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Education. It relates to your personal political staff trying to bully an elementary school principal in my constituency. I raised this issue with you on March 19 and you indicated you would get back to me. I've heard nothing from you.

To refresh your memory: An elementary school principal in my constituency sent out a notice to her community outlining the concerns about educational cutbacks, quite a legitimate exercise. Your personal political staff phoned this principal and said, "You have overstepped your bounds as a principal. You have no business revealing to your community in such a partisan manner. I am going to report you to your board and I

will talk with"—and then your personal political staff mentioned a reporter and a local Toronto paper, threatening. This was a clear threat to this principal.

Will you now apologize to the House for the actions of your political staff and will you assure us that you have taken the steps to make certain no one on your political staff does this again in the future?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the honourable member opposite for the question and this chance to publicly discuss the results of an investigation I asked my executive assistant to take on some time ago when this subject came to light. My executive assistant did make inquiries about the circumstances that are described. Not surprisingly, there are two versions of the circumstances here.

I think we've been able to ascertain from the only third parties involved in this particular discussion that the member of staff in the ministry office acted in what I believe to be a very professional manner and acted in a way that was meant to serve and to inform the public we serve. I hope that member of my staff and all the other members of my staff and everyone else's staff continue to work in a way that meets the public interest, because that was the interest being served in this particular incident.

Mr Phillips: I want to be very clear on this: This principal is very highly regarded. I've never met the principal before this particular incident, but since I certainly have talked to the principal. The principal is well regarded in every corner of the community, without any question. Against this we have your actions: You never got back to me. March 19 was the date. You never responded to me. Neither you nor anyone on your staff have ever phoned this principal to check her story out. What do we have here today? You say: "Listen, there are two sides of the story and I'm only going to listen to one side. I'm calling the principal a liar and I'm trusting my staff." That's what I think we're hearing from you, Minister.

Frankly, under the circumstances, I personally believe the principal. I've never met her, as I said before, but her reputation is impeccable. My question is this: Are you saying to the House today, and are you prepared to say to the House today, even without talking to the principal, that she's lying?

Hon Mr Snobelen: In response to the subsequent question, I'm not surprised that these sorts of incidents arise from time to time where there are two different versions of a conversation that has happened before. I can tell you, and I'd like to reaffirm this, which I gave in my original answer and which might help the member opposite understand the process of investigating this, that inside of the versions—and I won't relate all of it here today again, but I can assure the member opposite that my executive assistant did check with a third-party source who was quoted by both individuals involved and that third-party source, who happens to be a source from the media, verified the version of events that was related by staff.

In any event, for the information of this House, the calls were initiated because we had calls to my office from parents in that area who were concerned about what

they thought was a blatantly partisan letter being sent home from school by a teacher. Those parents contacted my office and were very concerned about that. I think at the end of the day, if the member opposite had heard the things that my executive assistant has heard, he would be assured that my staff has operated with the public interest in mind and I think in a reasonable fashion.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. When you took over your portfolio, there were already a number of measures that were in place in the social assistance system to monitor fraud. Some had been in place from the beginning of the system and some had been instituted by our government. Minister, you kept many of those measures, but you introduced a few new ones so you could take credit for any of the savings that resulted. We all understand that's a typical kind of a process.

But finally now we have some of the answers to the questions that were put by us in November 1995 around one of those issues, and that's the snitch line you put in place. Your welfare fraud snitch line cost \$166,854 and frankly was just a public relations exercise. Now this morning you told reporters who questioned you about your answers that you couldn't outline the results because of the length of time it takes to investigate allegations.

Minister, information we received from your own ministry shows that more than half the calls that were made to the snitch line were made in those first six weeks, the six weeks covered by our questions. Surely your ministry is functional enough to tell us what happened to allegations that were made more than five months ago and whether they in fact resulted in savings for the social assistance system.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): The member opposite would know full well that it certainly takes some time to go through the process of the court system. As a former Solicitor General, I think she would certainly acknowledge that. It's very important for us, and there's a procedure for this, to make sure there are no unsubstantiated claims that are pursued. We have to make sure that if there are claims of fraud, they are genuine.

I would be happy to indicate that we received between October and February 21 over 15,000 calls. Of those calls, in contradiction to what the honourable member is saying, about 63% have been referred to the local eligibility review officers for further investigation, because there is thought to be some merit here. Clearly the message to the government right now is that no fraud is good fraud.

1500

Mrs Boyd: It's very clear that this expensive public relations exercise, which is going to cost \$177,100 next year, is simply a witchhunt.

The minister can't tell us how many of the people who were named were actually in receipt of social assistance. Sure, he says that 64% were referred to local municipal or provincial welfare offices, but he can't tell us how many of the people were legitimately working and were claiming their earnings; he can't tell us how many calls

were simply the work of vindictive neighbours; he can't tell us how many of these people are legitimately wondering what kind of witchhunt this is.

Frankly, if we want to talk about fraud, we should talk about the fraud that's involved in a system that costs \$6 per call and \$8.50 for specific allegations when we get no results after all this time. This is not a good use of money. It's a very expensive way for this minister to try and pretend that he's doing something about managing the social assistance system, just as he's trying to pretend that Ontario Works will fool people into the fact that you're creating jobs.

We want to know whether you intend to keep on with this witchhunt, whether you think this kind of expense is worth the lack of results that we have.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Those certainly are very inflammatory words that the honourable member is using. If we can just take ourselves back in time for a bit here, we can see that when we made the announcement about the fraud and the eligibility measures, we indicated that it's our estimation that due to the fraud hotline and the fraud prevention team, we expect to save taxpayers of this province around \$25 million this year for an investment of \$170,000. I think that's a pretty good investment.

If I can just draw the comparison to Crime Stoppers, I don't see why anyone would not want to report fraud taking place, because the only difference is that this is taxpayers' money that's being defrauded.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Pursuant to standing order 34(e), the member for Fork William has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given yesterday by the Minister of Education and Training concerning education funding. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that the North York Branson Hospital merge with the York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES REGIONAL OFFICE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas on April 11, 1996, we were advised by the Minister of Natural Resources of the government's announcement of a major restructuring which is based on bringing a more businesslike approach to the government; and

"Whereas, as part of the major restructuring, it is the intention of the government to relocate the regional office of the Ministry of Natural Resources from Cochrane to Timmins; and

"Whereas this initiative will result in the approximately 42 positions lost and more than \$2 million worth of annual income from our community of 4,500 people, before taking into consideration the impacts on the service sector and other ministries that are being restructured;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the municipal council of the corporation of the town of Cochrane expresses its profound objection to the government's proposal to relocate the Ministry of Natural Resources regional offices from Cochrane to Timmins and requests that an impact analysis study be conducted prior to the relocation of the ministry positions from the town of Cochrane; and

"Be it further resolved that this resolution be forwarded to the Honourable Mike Harris, Premier of Ontario, and the Honourable Chris Hodgson, Minister of Natural Resources."

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed as quickly as possible with legislation to reduce our provincial tax rates, as promised during the last provincial election, and we call on all members of the Parliament of Ontario to support the government in its promise to reduce provincial income tax rates in Ontario."

Like the vast majority of Ontarians, I support this petition and I have signed it.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the public sector teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected a proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

I've affixed my signature in agreement with this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): I have a petition from a group of Burlington residents who are

concerned with child care in Ontario and I read their statement to you.

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services is undertaking a review of the child care system in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, do petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore stability and balance to the child care system by ensuring that all licensed child care providers are treated equally, with all sectors having both the same benefits and responsibilities; ensuring that all licensed child care centre staff receive the same benefits from the government, specifically the wage enhancement grant, regardless of the status of their employer; and ensuring that all funding goes directly to the provision of care for children and families in need."

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is a stated objective of this government to diminish the debt that the present generation leaves to coming generations;

"Whereas non-sustainable activities increase our debt to future generations and otherwise diminish their options for secure lives;

"Whereas non-sustainable activities require continual inputs of non-renewable resources, use renewable resources faster than their rate of renewal, cause cumulative degradation of the environment, require resources in quantities that could never be available for people everywhere and lead to the extinction of other life forms;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider sustainability in all its decisions and to avoid giving the appearance of dealing with the problem of debt by shifting our liabilities from financial ledgers to less obvious domains, where their continued growth is less forgiving and harder to correct."

I affix my signature.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts.

"The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This has been signed by a number of residents from eastern Ontario, and I affix my signature as well.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Bill Grimmatt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition signed by approximately 65 persons, some of whom are from my riding and some of whom are from other ridings, relating to the privatization of public services.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals;

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of troubled youth, and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas the principles of discipline, self-help and regimented environment at Transition House have combined with the counselling and support to provide youth with the motivation and self-respect to return to school or find jobs; and

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on the statistics of children and youth in crisis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and placed the existence of Transition House in jeopardy,

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

This is signed by a number of residents from the county, and I affix my signature to it.

1510

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a petition addressed to the government of Ontario, and it's in opposition to the changes for compensation; a petition against the changes the Harris government wants at the WCB, and to regain fair benefits that were agreed to in 1915.

"Remember that injured workers are there because they had the desire to work and pay their dues to society, meaning their government. If you cut their resources off, fewer and fewer workers would be willing to take the unsecured jobs, and therefore there will be fewer workers paying their taxes to the government.

"Think of it as if you would be willing to take a job even if it meant ending up crippled for the rest of your life, without any resources. Even if you take a job and injure yourself, what would you do? Because of your cuts, you'll be placing many, many lives in that very same situation."

I affix my name to the petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I wish to present a petition to the Legislature from approximately 15 constituents relating to their concerns on rent regulation. It's in its proper form and I'll affix my signature to the petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition regarding high quality child care for the children of Ontario to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas as parents and residents of Peterborough we are aware that your government is presently reviewing the Ontario child care system and we agree that changes to this system are needed; and

"Whereas carefully balanced fiscal responsibility and social needs is a necessity; a compassionate society must provide all children with a safe, nurturing and stimulating place during their most formative years,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to retain high-quality, accessible, licensed, non-profit child care as an option for Ontario parents and children."

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects for Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it's committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the

Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of the St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I affix my signature also.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE SETTLEMENT

Mr Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I have a petition to the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We oppose the treatment that was given the OPSEU members. We want you to go back and negotiate again at the table with respect to genuine willingness to listen.

"We want you to reconsider the timing of the proposed tax cuts. This is not the way to keep the economy going. This will not mean that you have to resign if you do not go ahead at this time. It will mean that it is just common sense. It is common sense to listen and learn from the many voters who trusted you."

I present this petition on behalf of people in the riding, in Carleton Place, Smiths Falls and area.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition here.

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to the proposed changes to workers' compensation in Ontario, including the elimination of the current bipartite board of directors, the reduction of temporary benefits from 90% to 85%, the introduction of an unpaid waiting period for compensation benefits, legislated limits on entitlement, reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements.

"We demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent accidents, no reduction in current staff levels at the WCB and continued support for the bipartite board structure."

It's signed by a number of residents from Wheatley, Leamington and Tilbury.

COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition which is signed by 24 residents in the riding of Sudbury East and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris said on May 30, 1995, 'If I don't live up to anything that I have promised to do and committed to do, I will resign'; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised on May 30, 1995, 'No cuts to health care spending,' but in the November economic statement we see \$1.3 billion in cuts to health care spending over the next three years; and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to defend health care cuts in funding; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in the Common Sense Revolution that, 'This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs,' but in the November 29 economic statement we see a prediction of only 253,000 jobs created over the next three years and an unemployment rate of 8.6% in two years, which is the same as today; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in the Common Sense Revolution that, 'Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut,' but in the November 29 economic statement cut the Ontario drug benefit plan and is making seniors and the vulnerable pay for their drugs; and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to seniors and the disabled;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Mike Harris keep his promise and resign."

I've affixed my signature to it and I agree entirely with the petitioners.

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House in committee of the whole.

MPPs PENSION AND COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996

PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA RÉTRIBUTION ET DU RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES DÉPUTÉS

Consideration of Bill 42, An Act to reform MPPs' pensions, to eliminate tax-free allowances and to adjust MPPs' compensation levels / Projet de loi 42, Loi portant réforme du régime de retraite des députés, éliminant les allocations non imposables et rajustant les niveaux de rétribution des députés.

The First Deputy Chair (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Are there any questions, comments or amendments, and if so, to which sections of the bill?

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): I have eight amendments: section 8 of the bill, subsection 62(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act; section 8 of the bill, paragraph 14 of subsection 62(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act; section 8 of the bill, subsection 62(1.1) of the Legislative Assembly Act; section 9 of the bill, subsection 63.1(1.1) of the Legislative Assembly Act; subsection 13(1) of the bill, subsection 67(7.1) of the Legislative Assembly Act; subsection 15(5) of the bill, subsection 69(5) of the Legislative Assembly Act; schedule A of the bill, subsection 16(1) of the MPPs Pension Act, 1996; and schedule A of the bill, subsection 16(2) of the MPPs Pension Act, 1996.

The First Deputy Chair: Shall sections 1 to 7 carry? Carried.

We will deal with the amendment to section 8.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Section 8 of the bill, subsection 62(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act:

I move that subsection 62(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act, as set out in section 8 of the bill, be amended by striking out the portion that precedes paragraph 1 and substituting the following:

"Salary for additional responsibilities

"(1) The annual salary of a member is increased by the following amount, expressed as a percentage of the annual salary set out in subsection 61(1), for any one of the following positions that he or she holds:"

The First Deputy Chair: Any debate?

Mr Sampson: Mr Chairman, I'll clarify if you want. This motion clarifies that a member who holds two positions may receive additional annual salary for only one of them. That's the purpose of this amendment.

The First Deputy Chair: Further debate? Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Further amendments?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Section 8 of the bill, paragraph 14 of subsection 62(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act:

I move that paragraph 14 of subsection 62(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act, as set out in section 8 of the bill, be amended by striking out "14.1 per cent" and substituting "18.1 per cent."

Mr Sampson: I believe that is not the appropriate amendment. If I could just pass it to my colleague here.

The First Deputy Chair: Just to make sure, I will read the amendment.

Mr Villeneuve moves that paragraph 14 of subsection 62(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act, as set out in section 8 of the bill, be amended by striking out "14.2 per cent" and substituting "18.3 per cent."

Any debate?

Mr Sampson: The purpose of this motion is to provide that the government whip receive an additional annual salary that corresponds to the current legislative arrangements.

The First Deputy Chair: Further debate? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sampson, I believe you have another amendment.

Mr Sampson: Section 8 of the bill, subsection 62(1.1) of the Legislative Assembly Act:

I move that section 62 of the Legislative Assembly Act, as set out in section 8 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

"More than one position

"(1.1) If the member holds more than one position listed in subsection (1), he or she is entitled to be paid for the position with the higher salary."

This motion just clarifies that where a member holds more than one position, the member is entitled to only the additional salary for the position with the highest additional salary component.

The First Deputy Chair: Any further debate? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall section 8, as amended, stand as part of the bill? Agreed.

An amendment to section 9, Mr Sampson.

Mr Sampson: I move that section 63.1 of the Legislative Assembly Act, as set out in section 9 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsection:

"Expenses actually incurred

"(1.1) Nothing in subsection (1) prevents a member from being reimbursed for expenses actually incurred in the discharge of his or her duties as a member."

The motion just clarifies that the prohibition on tax-free allowances does not prevent reimbursement for expenses actually incurred.

The First Deputy Chair: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall section 9, as amended, carry? Carried.

I believe you have another amendment.

Mr Sampson: To section 13, I believe.

The First Deputy Chair: Shall sections 10 through 12 carry? Carried.

Mr Sampson: I move that section 13 of the bill be amended by adding the following subsection:

"(1) Section 67 of the act is amended by adding the following subsection:

"Same, accommodation in Toronto

"(7.1) The Board of Internal Economy may reimburse a member (up to such maximum amount as the board may determine) for his or her actual costs of accommodation in Toronto if the costs are incurred due to special or unusual circumstances while he or she is on business as a member of the assembly and if the member is not otherwise entitled under this act or the Executive Council Act to be paid an amount for accommodation in Toronto."

This amendment just clarifies that the Board of Internal Economy can reimburse the member for accommodation expenses incurred in special circumstances while on business as a member.

1530

The First Deputy Chair: Any debate? Shall the amendment carry? Carried.

Shall section 13, as amended, carry? Carried.

Shall section 14 carry? Carried.

I believe there's an amendment to section 15.

Mr Sampson: I move that subsection 69(5) of the Legislative Assembly Act, as set out in subsection 15(5) of the bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

"Annual salary

"(5) For the purposes of this section, the annual salary of a member is the annual salary set out in subsection 61(1)."

This amendment deals with the severance allowance payable to a member on ceasing to be a member of this assembly and it's based on the member's annual salary of \$78,007. The additional salary paid to ministers and members holding additional positions is not being considered. It's the base amount. The basis of severance allowance proposed in this amendment is the basis currently used in the Legislative Assembly; that is, excluding from the severance allowance calculations of ministers' salaries and members' salaries for additional positions.

The First Deputy Chair: Any debate? Shall the amendment carry? Carried.

Shall section 15, as amended, carry? Carried.

Shall sections 16 to 24 carry? Carried.

There are two amendments to the schedule.

Mr Sampson: I move that subsection 16(1) of the MPPs Pension Act, 1996, as set out in schedule A to the bill, be amended by inserting "on or" in the third line before "June 8, 1995."

The First Deputy Chair: Any debate? Shall the amendment carry? Carried.

I believe there's another one.

Mr Sampson: I move that subsection 16(2) of the MPPs Pension Act, 1996, as set out in schedule A of the bill, be struck out.

That motion deals with a requirement no longer required by Revenue Canada as part of the pension plan.

The First Deputy Chair: Any debate? Shall the amendment carry? Carried.

Shall section 16, as amended, carry? Carried.

Shall schedule A, as amended, carry? Carried.

Shall the title of the bill carry? Carried.

Shall Bill 42, as amended, carry? Carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Mr Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report.

The First Deputy Chair: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

The committee of the whole House begs to report one bill with certain amendments and asks for leave to sit again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

MPPs PENSION AND COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996

PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA RÉTRIBUTION ET DU RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Sterling moved third reading of Bill 42, An Act to reform MPPs' pensions, to eliminate tax-free allowances and to adjust MPPs' compensation levels / Projet de loi 42, Loi portant réforme du régime de retraite des députés, éliminant les allocations non imposables et rajustant les niveaux de rétribution des députés.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Do you have any remarks to make, Mr Sterling?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Not at this moment.

The Acting Speaker: Shall third reading of Bill 42 carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I believe the member for Hamilton Centre had the floor.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I had ended my remarks yesterday by reading quotes from the back benches of the government side of the House. Lo and behold, one would have thought that were this some grave error or mistake on the part of those honourable members we would have had a shift in their position or in their comments, and yet we all awoke this morning to fresh quotes.

I'll say this much for the two members, the member for Grey-Owen Sound and the member for Quinte: They are consistent and they are certainly holding firm to what I would also agree to be the truth and a reflection of exactly what's going on.

Today's new quotes made by these same honourable members outside the House yesterday, just after we had reviewed them in question period, read as follows. The member for Grey-Owen Sound, asked about the fact that he had reflected earlier that Minister Snobelen didn't put anything in his infamous toolbox, which is effectively what this bill is supposed to be—the fresh quotes on top of last week's are: "The toolbox is empty. We were promised some tools and they just don't seem to be there.... I'm concerned about it." A further quote from him: "I'm saying they are out of control. I want more direction," speaking of the minister and the Ministry of Education.

1540

Far, far from being just a series of complaints by school board trustees or indeed some kind of rhetoric by the opposition, we see very clearly that even members of the government caucus are so embarrassed by the lack of any real caring about the direction of education in the province that they continue to feel compelled to speak out, not just once, but even after a few days have passed and they've spoken to the minister—I'll bet that was an interesting discussion—they continue to claim this government is not doing what it promised to do and that the ministry is out of control and the minister is creating a phony crisis wherein he hides behind this crisis and uses it as his excuse for slashing and cutting and quite frankly gutting much of what education is all about.

I maintained yesterday in my remarks that the political agenda here was not only to achieve the financial goal, but the other part of the political objective was to give someone else the blame; that this government would be the author of this attack on the future of our children, on our education system, but would finagle it in such a way that the local school board trustees are deemed to be the bad people who are making cuts to the local education system.

I can say with a great deal of confidence that the school board trustees in both the private and public boards across this province are not about to stand there and wear the negative politics this government deserves to carry. They're not about to do that, and I can say it's because of the damage it does to the local education system that they're not going to do it.

It's not a political agenda on their part, because we know there's a mixture of representatives from all three parties here and people who are not aligned to any particular party, and they all feel the same way. I've been lobbied by them; all the members, including government

members, I'm sure, have been lobbied. If any of the government members would dare to meet with their local trustees, I'm sure they would begin—begin—to get a sense of the hopelessness and helplessness these school board trustees feel as they're dealing with these impossible situations, absolutely impossible. Talk about irresponsible.

This is a government that said to those school boards, "You will take a hit that is equivalent to"—based on their fiscal year and the number of months they have to actually find the savings, that in effect gives them a hit of \$1 billion across the province, and this government has said to those trustees: "You go find that \$1 billion, each of your boards, your share of it. You find that \$1 billion, but don't you dare cut anything that would affect classroom learning and don't you dare raise taxes." Isn't that wonderful, and isn't that easy for the Minister of Education and the Premier to do, to stand there and paint this wonderful scenario they would like to see happen, which anyone who understands the realities of budgeting on school boards and at the local level would know is absolutely impossible. You can't do it.

The minister continues to stand up and say that 47% of the money spent by school boards does not affect the classroom. I invite the minister to come into my home town of Hamilton, meet with my school board trustees, look them in the face and say to them, "You effect these kinds of cuts; don't affect the classroom at all and don't raise taxes." I defy the Minister of Education and Training to come into Hamilton and do that, because he will hear very clearly that you can't do it, that it can't be done.

This government knows it, but they don't care. Why don't they care? Their greater priority than children's education is their tax cut. We know that to pay for that tax cut they have to find \$5 billion a year, so \$5 billion is being found in part in the education system—\$1 billion worth, in fact—so that this government can give the top 10% income earners of this province a 30% tax cut, because we know that top 10% income earners will receive over 60% of that tax benefit, that 60% of that \$5 billion will go to the top 10% income earners. I say, on behalf of the school board trustees in my community, that this whole thing sickens and angers them, and so it should.

I move now to what is happening in my community and how it relates to Bill 34, which we have here before us today.

First of all, the school board trustees in my community agree with the two Tory government backbenchers that the toolkit that is supposedly this bill we're debating today does not do the job. You've managed to upset virtually everyone involved in education, from school board trustees to administrators, to unions, to cleaners, to the community, everybody, and yet this minister continues to stand up and say that he is helping the school boards achieve the objectives this government is forcing down their throats.

What is the result in Hamilton? There was a major struggle to keep junior kindergarten in the city of Hamilton. If it weren't for the efforts of our school board trustees—I give them their due—and Friends of Junior

Kindergarten, an organization of parents who care who exerted the kind of political pressure at the local level that this government claims to care and support—in this case it was used to keep something that this government is prepared to let go, and that is junior kindergarten.

You look at the language in here and it talks about “boards may choose.” The reality is that this government is saying, “Trustees and school boards, if you have no other choice, as you see it, to find cuts, then we’re prepared to see you sever JK in order to achieve our fiscal needs,” which of course take us back to the tax cut.

The youngest kids, at a time when they can benefit the most in terms of junior kindergarten, are okay to cut loose, but will this government take responsibility? No. They will stand up as they have done and say, “That’s a local decision; we didn’t decide to cut junior kindergarten from that particular board, so don’t blame us,” and then sit down in their place, when the reality is that they’ve put school board trustees in such a box that they have no alternative.

Our job, as I see it, is to explain to the people of Ontario, on behalf of those school board trustees and on behalf of parents and teachers who care, that this is exactly what’s going on. Every time we see a cut like this, make sure, parent, taxpayer, that you understand it’s the agenda of the Harris government at Queen’s Park that is forcing school board trustees into these awful predicaments.

At the end of the day I’m very proud to say that the school board in my home town of Hamilton has preserved junior kindergarten, but at a cost. I see a couple of backbenchers nodding their heads like, “See, we told you.” The reality is no, it doesn’t fit exactly your perfect little world that doesn’t exist in Toryland.

1550

The fact of the matter is that there will be, subject to one caveat which I’ll come to, a 3.16% increase in the assessment rate for education in the city of Hamilton. That amounts to an assessment increase of about \$31 on the average home. I can say that I know the school board trustees in Hamilton are not proud of that aspect. They’re not proud that they have to raise taxes by that amount, but I want to serve notice that I’m very proud of their political guts to take whatever heat there is rather than decimate junior kindergarten in my community. I think there has to be those kinds of offers of support, because as politicians we know how difficult that is.

I would be much more worried about the future of the children in my riding if we lost junior kindergarten, and I see part of my obligation as their representative here at Queen’s Park to make sure the blame is put where it belongs. Every dollar of that increase in Hamilton is a result of the Mike Harris government and their agenda, period, full stop.

I mentioned a caveat. Even with that—and I’m going to mention some of the cuts it took to arrive at that figure—there’s still the need for this board, in order to stay at this level of increase, to find some way with the teachers of taking \$5 million out of their collective agreement. I’m not going to get embroiled in that discussion and that debate at this stage, because that has to happen initially with the school board trustees and the

elected union representatives. But I think it’s shameful that, first of all, the school board trustees were forced into a position of having to increase taxes in order to keep junior kindergarten in Hamilton; and, further, that the only way they could do that was through some expectations that now the teachers are going to have to come up with \$5 million.

I know this government hates teachers. They think they’re all overpaid and underworked, the same as they viewed OPSEU workers and CUPE workers and, quite frankly, any other worker who doesn’t fit their little world of how things ought to operate. The fact of the matter is, it is a crying shame that this kind of dynamic at a time when we’ve got a crisis in our education system and a problem to deal with on the fiscal side—these are the kinds of things our school board trustees and the elected representatives of OSSTF and the other unions have to deal with. It truly is a shame that that’s what’s happening.

I want to return to the point where this government said, “Well, 47% of all the expenditures at the school board do not relate to classroom learning.” Well, in my riding, in my community, where these very courageous school trustees have taken the stand they have, these are the kinds of cuts they also had to make to keep the increase at the level it’s at. They cut \$611,000—had to cut; the blame belongs here, not with them. They were forced to cut \$611,000 from the transportation budget for special education students—don’t you feel real proud about that, Harris Tories?—\$500,000 from supply teachers, \$220,000 affecting adult students in regular school, 14.6 elementary teaching positions, \$100,000 in books, films and software.

I defy any member of this government to stand up and tell me and the people of Hamilton how \$100,000 taken from the acquisition fund for books and films and software is not going to affect classroom learning and classroom teaching. You cannot possibly defend—

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): Stop yelling. We can hear you.

Mr Christopherson: One of the backbenchers is saying, “Lower your voice.” That’s because you don’t want to hear this. You don’t like it when people point out the fallacy of what you’re doing. You’re going to continue to hear from me at this level and louder for the next four years, until we can turf you out of there and put this province back on the road to caring about people and caring about children.

Further, there are 82.8 full-time equivalents, which is 104 working people—not that this government cares about working people—who have received and will receive their pink slip who are cleaners. Some, such as the Minister of Education and Training, will say that cleaners do not directly affect classroom learning. I would ask any of those members to speak with Mr Ray Mulholland, who is a school board trustee in Hamilton and has been for 22 years. He represents ward 4, which happens to be the same ward I represented when I was an alderman and regional councillor. Trustee Mulholland is one of the most respected elected people in the entire community of Hamilton, and what he has to say about whether cleaners affect classrooms needs to be heard, whether you want to hear it or not.

It's his contention, and I agree with him wholeheartedly, that if you can't clean the schoolrooms properly you're going to affect the kids. First of all, if you've got kids who have allergies and sensitivities and that room is not being cleaned properly and regularly, there's a good chance a child afflicted with sensitivities to those kinds of ailments will not be able to attend school full-time because they're going to be off sick. If you don't have enough cleaners in the school when they're needed and you have an incident where a child is sick in that classroom, for all intents and purposes, until that's cleaned up, the learning in that classroom has stopped. The learning is not going on.

This government doesn't want to recognize that all these things—transportation, cleaning, teachers, books, films—have to do with classroom learning. This government rejects that and says, "No, that's not part of classroom learning."

I say to the government very clearly that across the province we're seeing board after board after board facing the same dilemma, wanting to preserve and enhance their education system, being told by this government that they have to make multimillion-dollar cuts, that they cannot and should not affect classroom learning. "Oh, and by the way, don't you dare raise taxes either," because you have deemed that shouldn't happen in the Mike Harris empire. The Hamilton example shows you can't do all of that. This government knows that. Even they can figure out that you can't do that. But they don't care enough to back away from their tax cut or to provide some real assistance to school boards. They would rather just put out their political message, "This is the way you ought to do your business," and then stand back and let all the chaos take place.

In my community—and I know it's different in some; they're breaking it down differently. I want to come back to the issue of JK. I feel very strongly that not only school boards but municipal councils and regional councils need to approach their budgeting in the same way as our school board trustees. Unfortunately, we can't do anything about the directives and orders this government gives out—it's a duly elected government with a majority in this House and it can, at the end of the day, do as it damn well pleases—but being handed that nightmare scenario, I approve and support the approach of the Hamilton public school board trustees wherein they said, "We will cut everywhere that we possibly can and we will do everything humanly possible to prevent a tax increase," but when we get into a crunch, when we get into a serious crunch between something like junior kindergarten or a modest increase in taxes, they will choose the children and their future, they will choose the preservation as much as they can of the system we have in our community.

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I would hope that city councils, when they're facing the same dilemma—because this government's putting the boot to municipal councils exactly the same way as they are to school boards, and the regional councillors, same thing is happening there and the same choices are being looked at. I'm very hopeful that most of those councils and school boards will take a much more humane

approach to budgeting than this government cares to do, because all this government cares about is making sure that they're more right-wing than Ralph Klein, that they do everything that the Common Sense Revolution says regardless of how much nonsense it might be or how much circumstances might change. This is the only thing that matters. This is the holy grail. It's the Common Sense Revolution, and that has all the answers to every problem.

With one eye very carefully affixed on the next election, this government marches in legislation, piece after piece, that goes after our health care system, breaking their promises, goes after the education system, breaking their promises, attacking the poor, attacking working people, attacking the labour movement, attacking environmental protection. That's the list, and you haven't even been in office a year yet. That's the list.

When we talk about human rights and we take a look at what you've done there, this government is totally bereft of any kind of understanding of where most people are and what they care about in the province of Ontario. I know you'll point back to June 8 and say that gives you the magic mandate to do whatever you want, and it certainly gives you the right to sit on that side and be a majority government. But I don't believe for a moment, I honestly do not believe, that the people of Ontario wanted a government to go in with a meat cleaver and just tear apart everything that makes this a great place to live. I don't believe that's the case.

I think the sort of action that the school board trustees in Hamilton have taken is proof of that, because there's a group of elected officials in their own right that have rejected your agenda that says, "No matter how much harm we do to kids, meet the fiscal reality." I think they have met the fiscal reality. I know how hard they've worked. I know each and every member, some better than others, but I know every member of the board and I know how much they care.

I think this is an example of where somebody outside this government's control and outside your political spin doctors has said: "We will go this far in meeting the fiscal needs because we have to do something, and that's agreed by everyone. We will not march, lockstep, into this government's parade just to achieve your political agenda of trying to get re-elected at the end of four years based on the budgets and the deficit and the debt and the dollars and completely forgetting about people." Because that is exactly what this government is doing.

I want to close my remarks today by saying very, very clearly that I believe—I said this earlier; it's in the Hansards—that we will have, after every piece of legislation this government brings in, more and more evidence of the argument we make that this government is hell-bent to provide that tax cut to their wealthy friends, who are going to benefit the most, no matter how much damage it does, and they're prepared to take care of their powerful, wealthy friends through their attack on environmental protection, attack on the labour movement, attack on working people.

On occupational health and safety, the minister got up and talked about something today. Look at the agenda, I say to anyone who wants to check what this government's done on occupational health and safety.

On issue after issue, you have sided against the average person in the province of Ontario, and the day of reckoning for this government is coming.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure today to rise in response to the comments made by the member for Hamilton Centre on Bill 34. I took particular exception to his remark that we do not care about the children. I think that's completely out of order and out of context and really belongs in the rhetoric of that party. To think that statement has any validity is thoughtless.

That must be established firmly, that we do care. We certainly care as much as anyone else in this province, and that's why we're making these required, fundamental changes to the way education is funded today.

To think it's unachievable is unusual. It's without thought and without any understanding. What we're suggesting is that the \$1 billion over two years represents approximately 6%. The rest of the province, the ministries and the rest of us are all familiar with decreases in pay and other ways of restraining waste and duplication.

Let me, for example, suggest that in my riding of Durham East there are five school boards, all of them doing many of the same duties. Do you hear me? Five school boards. Isn't that a little redundant? This legislation encourages cooperation and savings within the system. Of three of those boards, two have already decided to retain junior kindergarten.

Let me conclude briefly by saying that boards were elected to make decisions and that's exactly what we expect them to do. Bill 34 gives them many of the tools necessary to make those decisions. The decisions are tough, yet I read in this morning's paper that many of the trustees refuse to take a rollback in pay. Then they're going to sit across the bargaining table from teachers, asking them to take a reduction in pay. We all must share in it and it must be fair for everyone across the province. They have to look at alternative methodology, differentiated teachers and the waste and duplication in busing.

It is achievable for the people of Ontario and most of all for the children of Ontario.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I'm pleased to join this debate again this afternoon, albeit very briefly. I was interested again this afternoon to hear from the member for Durham East, who is quite fulsome in his views on this subject. I think the member makes some very good points in responding to the previous speaker and to myself yesterday.

I brought today what I didn't have yesterday, which is the Ministry of Education's wealth index, where it lists from top to bottom—from the poorest, which is the Chapleau separate board, to the wealthiest, which is the Toronto Board of Education—the list of local wealth. It's a very interesting list.

I simply say to my friends opposite that it is not lost on me that according to the Ministry of Education's own wealth index, the fifth most wealthy board in terms of its local tax base is, interestingly, the Haliburton County Board of Education.

Actually, according to the ministry's own statistics here, the Durham board ranks in the upper 20%.

The fact of the matter is that the board I was talking about yesterday, the Renfrew separate board, is the 12th poorest board.

What the member says is, I think, true to a certain extent: There have to be changes. I think the member from Hamilton was making the point that times are different and there has to be a recognition that we can't continue to spend money that we don't have or that the shareholders of this corporation called Ontario are reluctant to offer up in the ways that they have in the past.

But fair is fair, and when I look at this list and I have someone here telling me that his jurisdiction—I'll look at the Durham board. They rank 95th out of 122. So the wealth in Durham is much greater than it is in a place like Renfrew or Chapleau or the Kirkland Lake separate board. To find out, when I look at this list, that the Minister of Education and Training has made a special deal for the Haliburton board, which according to the ministry's own wealth index is one of the best boards in terms of local assessment, really begs a few other questions.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I want to congratulate the member for Hamilton Centre for making some very astute observations, particularly given that he's not a teacher by background. He identified a number of good points.

First of all, he says, "This toolbox is empty," and the toolbox that you've presented is full of nothing but chainsaws that do deep cutting into educational spending and that affect the classroom very seriously.

He then talks about JK. What you've done with this is to eliminate the universality of JK across Ontario. Some boards will have it and some boards will not. Some boards will compete very terribly with each other. If a public board has it, a separate board might go into further debt or to other strange cuts to be able to have the JK program as well in order to compete with the other board. It will introduce some terrible competition between boards, which sometimes will not be able to afford it because they don't have the same tax base.

1610

You are eliminating the kind of universality that gives a break to those students who come from poor, working-class homes. These are the formative years. This is when we need JK the most, and you're eliminating that.

Thirdly, you're taking \$1 billion away. You have not yet justified, and the member speaks correctly, where you're going to be taking that away. You're firing teachers; you're firing educational assistants. I don't know what you will do with principals, because you really can't fire them. You're firing, presumably, social workers. You're firing caretakers—less cleaning in the classroom. You are firing every possible person who assists the teacher in the classroom. That's what you're doing.

It's \$1 billion worth of cuts, and that will affect the classroom in a very, very serious way. It will affect students in particular, and it affects those students, on the whole, who come from poor, working-class homes.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate? If not, the member for Hamilton Centre, you have two minutes.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity and, regardless of the message and tone, I always appreciate the opportunity for feedback.

Let me just thank my caucus colleague from Fort York for his comments, which I appreciate very much, given that he was a former member of a public school board here and, I believe, knows an awful lot about this issue. I thank him for his comments.

The member for Renfrew North talked about local wealth. It's interesting to note that, under Bill 34, negative grants—which means that the school boards of Metro Toronto and Ottawa will actually be cutting a cheque to the government of Ontario. Rather than just receiving a reduction in their transfer payments, they actually have to write a cheque and give it to Queen's Park, to the Mike Harris Tories, as a part of Bill 34.

What we need to watch in Hamilton and Hamilton-Wentworth is that we're very close to that list, and in a few years it could very well be my home town that's writing a cheque to Queen's Park as a part of the enactment of Bill 34, which we are debating here today.

To the member for Durham East, one could take an hour to respond to his comments alone when he takes great umbrage at my saying they don't care about children. I have never suggested that for a minute. I didn't want to make a habit out of it, but earlier on in the term of this government I acknowledged that I don't think that because you're a member of this government, you're automatically evil, and therefore I don't think you get up in the morning and say, "How can we hurt children?" But I do believe you are so fixated on your tax cut that you're prepared to look the other way when children are being hurt, and that accusation I do lay at the doorstep of this government. I think the facts of what's happening across our province bear that out.

The fact that you say you're encouraging cooperation because of the tools you've been given in here is just a joke.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I am happy to rise today and speak in support of Bill 34.

At the outset I would like to quote Sir Winston Churchill, who rose in his place one day in the House of Commons and said, "It is a mere coincidence if there is any relativity between what my honourable colleague has said and the truth." I think if Sir Winston Churchill was in this chamber today and listened to some of the comments made by the member for Hamilton Centre, he might have made the same comment in response.

You see, I think it's fine to debate government legislation in a very strong, passionate way from the opposition benches. I have done that for almost 11 years and I know what that role is all about. But it's also about being accountable in the end to the people you represent in opposition. I think when you say this government is "gutting the system," which was one of the comments that was made yesterday, and the leader of the official opposition, Ms McLeod, today said children of this province are paying the price, these kinds of statements put a message out in the communities which is very disturbing for those communities. They're dependent on what you say in your community, because I'm not in your community most of the time, so they're dependent on what you say in your community and what you relate to your media.

Frankly, in a time and age where families, especially with school-aged children, and where people who have no children at all and seniors on fixed incomes are actually at the wall in terms of what they can afford in taxation, it's unfortunate that you add to the stress of all those people by talking about things that frankly are not the case.

Just speaking about things that are not the case, I must say that I have now received a list of ridings that received undue burden grants. The last two days in this House we've heard some very interesting, tough, heart-wrenching questions to the Minister of Education about one particular undue burden grant that was approved to a board within a riding that included the area governed by another cabinet minister. Lest we think, first of all, that undue burden grants are something we have just drawn out of a magic bag—I think earlier today the leader of the official opposition called it a special emergency fund—the undue burden grants have actually been in existence since 1974.

I thought, for those members who have been elected since that time, including myself, you might be interested to know it isn't a new, unique way of one minister looking after another minister's riding in terms of helping a school board that is in difficulty.

I think undue burden grants have been designed with a very good purpose and in the last decade—I've only gone back 10 years—we have actually more than 30 examples. The examples I thought you might be interested in would be, for example, 1987, Kirkland Lake. I wonder whose riding that was in 1987? Also in 1987, the Hamilton Board of Education; 1989, the Red Lake board; 1987, the Sudbury board. I don't remember us having a member for Sudbury since we had the wonderful Jim Gordon and I think he left us in 1987 as a member of this House and returned to being the great mayor of Sudbury.

In 1990, we had Prescott-Russell; twice in 1990 we had undue burden grants to Prescott-Russell, and I think that was our friend the Liberal member Jean Poirier. Then of course in 1990 we had North of Superior. Who could for a moment wonder who was the member for North of Superior, because we've heard a member of the New Democratic Party, the third party in this House, talk about the fact that his riding is so far to the north of our great province that he stands where he can see the curvature of the earth? We've heard from that member and I suppose North of Superior would either be in his riding or Mr Hampton's riding.

Anyway, the list is very interesting because it goes on to 1993, and guess who in 1993 got an undue burden grant? I don't know if he was Minister of Education at the time, but at one time the member for Windsor, Mr Cooke, was Minister of Education. I don't know if this was actually at that time, but nevertheless, for the whole five years that the New Democratic Party was the government, Mr Cooke was a cabinet minister.

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I'm just giving you these names because I think what's gone on in this House in the last two days has been an absolute disgrace. You've been highlighting something for which there are all kinds of cases of precedents, and

when we were in opposition I do not recall ever asking you, either the Liberals or the New Democratic Party, about your undue burden grants, because obviously, having been the government that established them back in 1974, we agreed with them.

In 1993 there was one to the Lincoln school board also, and I remember, with respect, that Mr Hansen was the member for Lincoln in 1993. Once you open these Pandora boxes, you'd better look all the way to the bottom of them before you stand in this House and challenge one grant made recently by the current government.

I thought the Liberal members would be interested to know today that in 1989 Richard Patten, the member for Ottawa Centre, was in cabinet as Minister of Government Services and also received a grant for a school board that was within his jurisdiction.

When Dr Richard Allen, MPP for Hamilton West, was Minister of Colleges and Universities and Minister of Skills Development—he had that ministry; isn't that interesting?—his school board received an undue burden grant. You do not see this Minister of Education's board receiving an undue burden grant.

In 1993 again David Cooke, the member for Windsor-Riverside, who was Chair of Management Board, also received an undue burden grant.

I think we should drop the subject about criticizing where these undue burden grants have been awarded because there's no debate about it. The fact is that it's a well-designed mechanism, where there is an undue burden on a school board in this province, by the change in the general legislative grants, and it's a means by which a burden on a particular board can be resolved. In protection of your boards and all of our boards, that is a vehicle we would want to continue.

The main thing we have to talk about in this Bill 34 is that it is dealing with some ways of saving money. There isn't anyone, surely, in this Legislature who wouldn't argue that there isn't enough money in the school system. In this province we spend more money on education than any other province per capita. I am quite sure that the children in this province are just as bright and capable of learning as in any other province, so we have to look at why we are spending more money on educating our children in this province.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): They'd be a lot brighter if they could read and write.

Mrs Marland: I say with respect, to the member who's just returned to the chamber, that we did not have interjections when the member for Hamilton Centre was speaking earlier, so I would request the same courtesy.

Mr Pouliot: He was not as provocative.

Mrs Marland: He was very provocative, but we waited until it was our turn to rise in our places and speak.

To suggest, for example, that this government hates teachers, hates everybody in OPSEU—when a member stands in his place and gives that kind of debate, as far as I'm concerned it shows an absolute lack of ability to debate. They start throwing out lines that have no relevance, first of all, to the matter at hand, which is Bill 34.

I think we should be in line with other provinces. I would even go further and suggest that we should be spending the same money on every child within our own province. Every child should have the same opportunity, equal and full opportunity, as any other child in our province.

I find it very difficult to look at the per-student costs of different school boards across this province and find close to \$2,500 differentials between what it costs to educate a child in one part of the province and what it costs to educate another child in another part of the province. Surely our children in Ontario should be able to access the same level of education no matter where they live, and have the same opportunity. I hope in the long run we will be able—and I'm sure our excellent Minister of Education is already looking at this, whereby we look at the efficiencies and fiscal management of some school boards versus the questionable efficiencies and fiscal management of other boards where more money is spent on a pupil than perhaps is necessary.

You can't argue in favour of keeping the status quo; you simply cannot. You cannot know what's going on in the education system today and have intelligence and say: "It's perfect. That's right. We want to keep everything as it is." I'm proud to say this government has the courage to make changes where they need to be made.

Among some of those changes listed in Bill 34, we have how we're going to deal with adult education. I think it's very important to understand what it is we're doing with adult education. We're not saying that adults no longer have the opportunity to go back to school, that they may no longer have the opportunity to complete a high school diploma if they hadn't had that opportunity earlier. What we are saying—and I want to read it specifically so there's no question about what it is we're saying. Proposed amendments contained in sections 3 and 4 will permit a school board to direct certain adult pupils to take credit courses offered in the board's continuing ed program as opposed to the regular day school program.

The important thing to recognize there is that we're not saying it has to happen; we're saying to that local school board, "You have the autonomy and the independence to make that decision where you think certain adult students can take their credit courses in the continuing ed program." The advantage for that adult student, I might add, is that they will then be in a program that is customized to them as adults. Surely nobody's going to stand in this House and defend teaching adults the way we teach adolescents. Surely there has to be a difference between the approach to subject learning and program design for an adult returning to school and for an adolescent in school for the first time. We're simply saying that boards will be permitted to make those decisions.

The other important part of this section is that it says that where, however, an adult requires a specific course for the purpose of obtaining a secondary school diploma, entering university or college or entering a trade, calling or profession, he or she will have the right to attend day school to take the course if it is not offered in the continuing ed program. All the misinformation about the fact that we're throwing all our adult students out on the

street and we don't want them in our day schools any more is absolute rubbish. It is absolutely incorrect.

Mr Pouliot: You're so biased.

Mrs Marland: We are also saying—and this is very important, I'm sure, to the member interjecting, because I know you care about these people—that any special-education, exceptional pupil who has been placed in a day school program will continue to have the right to attend day school. These are children with exceptional needs and they're going to be allowed to continue their day school program. In fact, other exceptions can be provided for by regulation.

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What we're saying, which I may add the two former governments haven't said, is that because you have a birthday and you turn 21 we're not going to throw you out of school. We're not going to say, "Okay, you're 21, out you go," because if you are a developmentally challenged individual, the fact that you're 21 one day and 22 the next doesn't suddenly increase your ability to learn; you are still struggling through school. What we are saying is that those young people will be allowed the opportunity to continue. Frankly, I think that's very fair.

Of course, another advantage to having as many adult pupils as we can in continuing ed programs is that the continuing education programs can use equally qualified teachers but on a contract basis and, I say to the member opposite, that's how they exist today. So if you don't understand that giving the flexibility of program planning itself to specialized-for-adults—plus the fact that the cost of the provision of that program is reduced because you don't have a full-time teacher with tenure at the top of the salary grid, you have somebody who's hired specifically for the job on contract.

That's terribly important because what it's saying is that we will be able to continue to say to adults who want to complete their education or get more education or increase their marks, "Yes, you can go back and do it, but the program will be directly designed for your needs." If that is going to cost less money, don't tell me it doesn't make sense to do it.

The other area that I think everybody agrees with is the amendments to subsection 5(2) and section 10. You will recognize that section when I tell you that it's dealing with sick leave. These amendments in those sections will delete the statutory entitlement of teachers to sick leave with pay. The Education Act currently provides that each full-time teacher shall receive 20 days of sick leave. This is prorated for part-time teachers. The number of sick days may be increased at the discretion of the board. That is the current status.

The amendments will be effective as of August 31, 1998, which is two years hence. The reason the effective date is that is to give boards and teachers time to negotiate their sick leave provisions in their collective agreements. If they agree upon sick leave provisions earlier than that date, the negotiated provisions will prevail over the statutory entitlement. In other words, it isn't Big Brother government coming along and saying, "You must do this." We're simply making the provision for boards to negotiate those sick leave provisions.

So all this rhetoric about the fact we haven't given school boards some changes—I don't want particularly to use the word "tools" because I think it's been misused—we are giving them changes in legislation which will help them with areas that presently are quite expensive.

I say to the members opposite, do you receive 20 days of sick leave with pay? I don't think so. I don't think you will find that in the private sector. However, if the teachers' federations decide that's important to them, then they may now negotiate it individually with their own school board and, vice versa, the board can negotiate it with them.

So what we are doing with Bill 34, I think, is extremely healthy. We are saying there are decisions that must be made by the local board and they must have the continued autonomy to do that. I can speak as someone who was a trustee for four years on the Peel Board of Education, and admittedly it was 22 years ago that I went on that board in 1974, but some of the—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You must have been 14 years old.

Mrs Marland: Thank you, the member for St Catharines. I was 14 years old at the time, or I probably wished that I was—and I say with absolute sincerity that some of the areas we're discussing 22 years later in Bill 34 and some of the other announcements that our Minister of Education, the member for Mississauga North, John Snobelen, has had the courage as minister to bring forward and make decisions on are frankly areas that our government in the 1970s, when I was a trustee on the Peel Board of Education, should have dealt with and made decisions on then.

But you see, it's much easier not to make the tough decisions in government. Every government—and I say every government of all three stripes until this government—looks at the tough decisions and then in a lot of situations backs away from them. The point is, to make the tough decisions, you're saying, "We're the government today, we have an obligation," and in our case, with 82 out of 130 ridings in this province, we have an extremely strong obligation to fulfil the mandate that was given to us by the people of Ontario. That mandate is to fix it, to reduce the cost of government, and what we are saying is that we will fulfil that mandate.

The final thing I want to say in closing is that I think it's very significant that a former Liberal cabinet minister—and I may add that when Mr John Sweeney was the Minister of Community and Social Services with the David Peterson government, he was a very highly respected minister, as he is today a very highly respected individual. That was demonstrated last year when the former government, the NDP government, decided to appoint John Sweeney to look at some of the areas that involve the cost of education and education funding in this province.

It's very significant when not a Conservative but a former Liberal cabinet minister came out in his report, which I think was tabled around November of last year, and in that report identified that 47% of the cost of the provision of education in this province today is outside the classroom.

The reduction the honourable Minister of Education has laid on all of the boards in this province amounted to 2% of their funding. In asking the boards to look at a 2% reduction, the Minister of Education was saying, "Well, surely everybody can find 2%."

Obviously, it has come to light there have been some boards for whom that is "an undue burden," so they have applied for undue burden grants. However, surely there is something wrong with an education system where boards decide that the programs and the changes they're going to make are not within that 47% of the cost of education that is outside of the classroom but they are making the cuts within the classroom.

The first thing they were doing was laying off teachers. We understand that part of it, of course, is related to the fact that teachers have to be given six months' notice, so some of it was just a procedural thing. On one day they were given six months' notice, then the following day they were saying, "We'll probably hire you back in the fall anyway, but just in case we couldn't keep all of you, we had to give all of you the notice in the meantime." In the meantime, those teachers are really stressed out, and wouldn't all of us be to know our jobs were on the line?

The classroom teachers' jobs on the line, when that isn't what this government is about. We said in our Common Sense Revolution and all through our campaign that we were going to protect funding and education in the classroom. The problem, you see, is that our strings of control only reach so far. We do not reach right into the boards of education boardrooms and control the trustees who sit around those board tables. What we will find, of course, is that the people who elect them are the people who control them. They will make the decision about whether those boards are making the right decisions in letting teachers be dismissed and affecting the classroom when 47% of the cost of education is in the bureaucracy tiered above the teachers.

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I can give you a very interesting example, because they are numbers I have never forgotten. When I was a trustee between 1974 and 1978 in Peel, we were at that time the third-largest public board in Canada. We had about 73,000 or 74,000 students, as I recall. We also had, as I recall, fluctuating between eight and 10 superintendents. Well, guess what? Twenty-two years later, the Peel Board of Education is now the largest public board in Canada, with about 103,000 students, and they have—the last count I was told—26 superintendents. Isn't it interesting? They have two and a half times as many superintendents and of course all the staff who tier under each superintendent's office, but not even a full third more students.

Obviously, there's a lot of work to be done. For the sake of the people who pay for all of this, namely, our taxpayers in Ontario, I'm very pleased that Bill 34 will be passed, hopefully this week, and we will be able to get on with some of the necessary changes, recognizing that there may be others we will have to make in the future, but at least this is a beginning. We have returned the optionality of programs like junior kindergarten to the local boards. Some boards, as has been referred to earlier this afternoon, have decided to continue those programs and some have decided not to, and there may well be

other programs within their jurisdiction that they wish to discontinue as well. As far as we're concerned, everything is on the table, except affecting the environment of learning for those children in their classrooms.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): In reply to the comments of the member for Mississauga South, I first want to say that although I appreciated much of what she said, it's unfortunate that she had to give them in such a condescending manner at the outset. I felt they were that way. My mother told me—and I'll leave it at that—a long time ago that people who live in glass houses simply should not throw stones.

Reference was made to the debate yesterday in the Legislature with the Minister of Education, some of the questions. I would point out to the member that I think it could have been solved much earlier, in a much more expedient fashion. I've looked at Hansard, and the minister was asked four times regarding the situation in the Haliburton area before he finally referred to the general legislative grants. He could have referred much earlier to those if that was the situation under which the Haliburton board received relief. He could have referred to the regulation that allows it much earlier in the question.

Frankly, to the member for Mississauga South and the minister, if he were here, that leads me to believe the minister really didn't understand what had happened or how it was arranged but that possibly later in the question period the information had been passed on to the minister. It could have been dealt with very quickly at the outset if the minister knew how the system worked, so I agree with the member for Grey-Owen Sound that maybe he just simply doesn't understand.

Mr Marchese: The member for Mississauga South makes some interesting points. I disagree, however, with most of them and I want to point out how that is the case.

She says the educational system can do a lot better with less. We argue you're not going to make students brighter by cutting educational funding; that I can tell you. The tools they're providing don't help teachers to teach more effectively. The methodology is not changing as a result of these cuts. Nothing is given to the classroom teachers that is going to make them better prepared to deal with the variety of problems and differences that are in a classroom—nothing. Your tools do nothing but make education more complicated.

In fact, your cuts are going to increase class size very dramatically, and that will make it more difficult for the classroom teacher to teach those students. So your tools don't help the teacher, in spite of what you say, and your cuts are not going to make students brighter and they're not going to make teachers more effective to teach, because there's nothing in the toolbox that does that.

The 47% cut being non-educational is nothing but a myth. In the Toronto board, 78% of the money we spent went into teachers' salaries and salaries in general. There is nothing of the magnitude you speak of, so it is a big lie.

As it relates to adult students, when you shift them to continuing education, what you're doing is simply cutting. You're cutting the rate in half, because if they

were in day school as they were in the past, they would get the full rate, as a regular student would. But shifting them to continuing education, you're cutting them by half.

You've done no impact studies whatsoever to show the kinds of effects it's going to have on the regular classroom, like at Parkdale, like at Central Tech and other schools outside of Toronto. You have done nothing that shows us the severe impact it's going to have on adult students.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I enjoyed very much the comments by my colleague the member for Mississauga South, which were obviously very well prepared and researched. I noted, particularly at the end of her remarks, she mentioned John Sweeney, the very well respected former Liberal Minister of Community and Social Services who was asked by the previous New Democratic government to look at the issue of school board amalgamation, and I noted that the member for Mississauga South mentioned the 47 cents on the dollar that Mr Sweeney said was spent outside the classroom. He used that figure from his examinations.

What I've said is to look at the issue, to say: "Forty-seven per cent? Let's cut that in two, just for the sake of argument." Let's say it's only half as much. No, no, let's even go further; let's say it's only a third as much. It would be approximately 15 cents on the dollar being spent outside the classroom, and I would indicate that is 65% less than Mr Sweeney said. Surely they could find that 1.8%, 2%, 2½% from that 15 in which to make the reduction. We see private sector organizations, we see municipalities, we see organizations right across the province and the whole country cutting to ensure they can live within their means, and surely we can do that in education.

I just point out—and this follows the comments of the member for Mississauga South—we wouldn't be in this position of having to try to balance the budget if we didn't have governments that over the last 10 years spent like drunken sailors, put this province in a terrible financial mess, taxed us to death, killed jobs. We wouldn't be in this situation if we weren't governed so badly over the last 10 years. That is the real point that's got to be put on the table, that we wouldn't be in this situation if it weren't for the bad government over the last 10 years.

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Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I am just a little provoked by the comment by the last member. He knows full well that Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and Norm Sterling left the Peterson government a \$3-billion deficit. He knows that spending was right out of line.

Anyway, to get to the member for Mississauga South's comments, I have never heard the member for Mississauga South so shamelessly apologetic for a government. This is not the member for Mississauga South I once knew. She would know from the Ministry of Education's own statistics that the board of which she speaks, the Peel board, is but four from the top of the wealthiest of all the boards in Ontario.

There's a reality out there. The reality out there for a member like I am is that there is no board that has half

the wealth that her Peel board has in this province, and when she talks about cuts, I have one board that has about a sixth of the wealth that her board has. So she talks about the cuts. Well, the boards at the bottom end, the boards without the assessment wealth, are in far more difficulty, of course.

She talks about my friend John Sweeney, a well-respected minister in the Peterson government. She talks about his report. She does not talk about things he said in his report that may not be tremendously helpful to her. She doesn't talk about the fact that Mr Sweeney said that education funding must be reformed. His suggestion was that we pool the commercial-industrial assessment across this province. You may not like that idea, but those kinds of ideas are part of the Sweeney report and should be discussed. She can't selectively choose her statistics.

I have never seen a more creative use of statistics than the member for Mississauga South has just presented to us in this House, and I say: "Gee, Margaret, you should've been here. I much preferred you a year ago."

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Your time is up. The member for Mississauga South.

Mrs Marland: I've always appreciated the critiques of our speeches in this House. I'm sorry for the member for Essex South, because you and I haven't been in this House together long enough for you to understand, and I apologize if my manner appeared to be condescending to you; it certainly was not intended to be, and I apologize if that were the case.

I do think, however, that it was very significant, I say to the member for Essex South who said, "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones." My simple response to you as a member of the official opposition is that you should've been thinking about that, your entire caucus should've been thinking about that before you asked those disgustingly personal questions to our Premier last week which were totally inappropriate. Yes, I agree we all live in glass houses, and for that reason, you should tread very carefully before you start to throw stones in a personal nature in question period.

To the member for Fort York I will simply say that we did not want the cuts to be made in the classroom, we specified that we did not want the cuts to be made in the classroom, and frankly I'm very upset that you would suggest that Mr Sweeney's report is a lie. It is not a lie, and 47% of the cost of education outside the classroom may well include teachers, but we want the money spent on teachers within the classroom, not in the hierarchy and within the administration of the board.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 34, which is a bill designed, in my view, to severely restrict the education system from doing the job many in this province would hope it would be able to do, and a job which people such as Premier Robarts and Premier Davis, I'm sure, would've wanted it to do, in years gone by.

I've listened to the government members from time to time, and it's obvious that the people in the Premier's office who develop the strategy for everyone have told them, "What you have to say to the public and to the opposition is, 'You can't be in favour of the status quo.'"

That's what they've been told to say, so you'll hear them all repeat that from time to time, and, "You're opposed to change." That's the line that has been given to the government members. Some of them use it; some of them don't.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): It's a good line.

Mr Bradley: I prefer the member for Grey-Owen Sound's line in the last few days.

Everyone in this House recognizes that we have to address the financial challenges that face Ontario. There isn't any doubt about that. There's a good consensus in our society that we have to face those particular financial challenges, so the argument and debate is over how we shall go about doing that.

What we have to understand is that when the government members get up and talk about education cuts and how quickly they're coming and how drastic they are, they are really talking about a situation where they're cutting this quickly and this drastically to finance a tax cut which at this point in time this province cannot afford.

Tax cuts are very popular. If you say to people, "We're going to cut your taxes," a lot of us are going to be attracted by that. But we have to know that when we cut the taxes, we have to borrow the money to be able to give it back to people. When you explain that to the average individual out there, they're not so attracted to a tax cut. They say, "You must be dreaming these figures up, because the government says this isn't the case."

Where do I get those figures? I go to a document known as the Common Sense Revolution, the campaign document put out by the Conservative Party. It lists how much lost revenue there will be each year as a result of the tax cut. It clearly demonstrates that over the term of office of the government, it would require more than \$20 billion more to be borrowed by the provincial government to give back to people.

When you explain that to people, they say: "I don't think we can afford this now. Is this why we're moving so quickly in Grey-Owen Sound and in Belleville and in St Catharines and other places to cut? Is this why we're moving so quickly and so drastically? And are we really going to have to borrow more money? That doesn't make common sense." I agree with them when they come to that conclusion. That's what this is all about: to finance the tax cut which will be largely to the benefit of the most wealthy and privileged in our society.

The tax cut will require spending about \$5 billion just to pay the interest costs of that tax cut. That's something else that would worry people concerned about the deficit and accumulated debt when they hear about the tax cut. They know that the tax cut and the money borrowed for it will add over \$20 billion in additional accumulated debt to this province's books, and they are very concerned about that.

They know as well that the tax cut is really transferring from the most progressive tax, the income tax, which takes into account a person's ability to pay, to the most regressive tax, the property tax, which does not take into account an individual's ability to pay, and to user fees,

which most assuredly do not take into account an individual's ability to pay. That is why we think this bill is not worthy of support.

We also know that what is happening is that the provincial government wishes to get the political credit for a tax cut while shifting to the municipalities and local agencies the flak that goes with having to raise taxes or raise user fees or significantly cut services considered essential to people in their area.

If the government wanted to tackle an area where—and I wish I had it with me today. I was reading, from October, a column by Dalton Camp. His column said: "We do not have a debt crisis. We have a revenue crisis." It was an excellent column. I commend it to people, that they go back to read it. It was a very thoughtful column, talking about where taxes are not being paid today.

If we listen to the Provincial Auditor, who's above politics, who's not a Conservative, a Liberal, a New Democrat or anything else and who looks objectively at the books, he said the number one problem with fraud is people not paying their taxes appropriately when those taxes are levied. So those who do pay their taxes are being penalized further by those who are evading. There was a suggestion made that if we were going to have a snitch line for people who were abusing the welfare system, there should be a snitch line for people who are abusing the system known as the taxation system in this province. These are already levied, accepted taxes in this province, levied by this Legislature.

1700

We are not facing a situation in education where there'll be no cuts. When the New Democratic Party was in power, facing some very difficult economic challenges, there were limitations placed on transfers to boards of education, and so there had to be cuts in services. They had to abrogate contracts. I know my friends in the New Democratic Party must have been very concerned at having to break contracts, collective agreements, but they did it because times called for it. So I don't think we can say there haven't been efforts already made to limit taxes in this province or to limit expenditures; there have been. They were perhaps in a more humane way than we are suggesting today. I won't get into post-secondary education, where we're facing similar problems, because that's not the content of this bill.

I also want to say that there were people who were concerned about the tax cut in the government benches. The member for Wellington, Ted Arnott, a respected individual in this House, wrote a letter to the Premier describing the tax cut as reckless. I agree with the member for Wellington, my friend Ted Arnott, that indeed that is a reckless initiative on the part of the government. The member for Grey-Owen Sound, Bill Murdoch, the member for Etobicoke West, Chris Stockwell, and the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Morley Kells, all expressed similar concerns. These are people with some experience out there in the political field. They're people who like to listen to what people are saying in their constituencies and to bring that back to this Legislature and particularly, I'm sure, to the government caucus, where some interesting discussions no doubt have taken place.

I will go on to some comments that have been made, but before I do, I want to look at some of the issues that have emerged. A rather interesting thing happened in St Catharines a little over a year ago. Visiting the city on the same day were Dianne Cunningham, the member for London North, who was the critic for the Conservative Party in the field of education, and Mike Harris, who was the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party at that time. They both spoke in St Catharines on education issues, but they had a different message.

Dianne Cunningham's message, the member for London North, the Conservative critic, was a moderate message, it was one which said, "Of course, we'll have to be careful in our educational expenditures, but I understand," she said, "the importance of an investment in education." The same day, Mike Harris, then the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, is addressing a far different group. He's addressing the Rotary Club and his message was far different and the people who were there heard that message, where it was in essence an education-bashing and public sector-bashing message, which with some members was popular; I think with more thoughtful members, it was not necessarily appreciated. But it really represents a difference in the Conservative Party in terms of their approach to important areas such as education, which represents an investment in our future when we make those investments.

I've heard it mentioned about amalgamation of boards of education and how that would be useful as a measure to save taxes. I can say in some cases that has to be looked at. No one is denying that we don't look at all of these options, but I think what they'll find out, for instance, in Niagara, to amalgamate the Niagara South Board of Education and the Lincoln County Board of Education is really going to have a very minimal effect on expenditures. Both boards have made a genuine effort already to cut back, to trim their expenditures, to become more efficient. What you do is lose something which has been near and dear to my Conservative friends over the years. There's one thing I can say the Conservative Party has stood for and that's been local autonomy and access to people at the local level. I hope that initiative isn't embraced holus-bolus. Where it makes sense and there's a consensus it should be proceeded with, I have no objection to that, but I think the government has to look extremely carefully at each option on a case-by-case basis before making that kind of decision.

I also want to look at the cutting of deals that were spoken about in this House. There's a lot of controversy and people disagree and so on. I hope what would not happen at any time, but particularly at a time when we're in constraint, is some people having more influence than others on the Minister of Education. It has been alleged that the Minister of Natural Resources got a special deal for the people of Victoria-Haliburton; and it's been alleged this afternoon, I think by the NDP in this case, that the Minister of Finance, in one of the boards of education he's involved with, was getting a special deal. The problem with special deals is that if they apply a formula that fairly fits the province, a lot of people aren't going to object to that, but if there are special deals which benefit one riding over another riding, I think

people have a legitimate concern to express about that. I hope that's not what the minister is embarking upon.

Before I get too far into my remarks, I want to quote from a couple of members who I think have put forward their views in a very honest way. One is the member for Grey-Owen Sound. Members in this House know that the member for Grey-Owen Sound and I have disagreed on a number of subjects. That doesn't mean there's a personal dislike; there isn't. That's the way it should be in politics or anything else. But there is one area where I can clearly say I agree with him. It is when he talked about the performance of the Minister of Education.

I happen to think, and it's a subjective evaluation, that the choice of the member for Mississauga North for the education portfolio was not a wise choice. The Premier may have had another ministry he wanted to place the member for Mississauga North in that might have made more sense. Certainly, the feeling I get from the Conservative government caucus when I hear some of the things that are happening out there is that there might have been a better placement in that regard. Maybe we'll see that change take place over the summer.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Name names.

Mr Bradley: The member for Ottawa-Rideau has said to me, "Start to name names," so I will. I will respond to that in a positive way by saying I was reading an article that's a very good one just on April 21. It says: "Yesterday, Tory MPP Bill Murdoch told an Owen Sound radio station that Snobelen is a 'little out of whack right now' and 'doesn't know what he's doing.'" I didn't say that, the NDP didn't say that, the Liberals didn't say that; that was Bill Murdoch, Conservative MPP for Grey-Owen Sound.

It goes on to say, "'I do believe our Ministry of Education is a little out of control,' Murdoch said when contacted by radio station CFOS about a recent spate of protests against Tory education cuts."

"I think our minister really doesn't know what he's doing—at times it seems that way."

"I think he mentioned he wanted to create a crisis—it looks like he's done that."

"Murdoch, who represents Grey-Owen Sound, was referring to a videotape that came to light last fall in which Snobelen told senior bureaucrats he wanted to 'invent a crisis' to help sell his reforms to Ontario's school system."

Mr Murdoch, the member for Grey-Owen Sound, says he understands there is a fiscal problem to be addressed, but he goes on to say: "'But, you don't create a crisis to do it. I think that the minister is a little out of whack right now.'"

I respect a person who is independent enough. The member for Grey-Owen Sound obviously isn't—what's the word we use?—trying to curry favour, I guess is the best way of placing it in this House, with those who would have a situation of trying to get into cabinet, because he's an independent-minded person.

When Mr Doug Rollins, the member for Quinte, who is a newer member, was at a Belleville high school, he said, and an article in the *Intelligencer*, which is surely a very respectable publication, says the following:

"The provincial government lied when it told Ontarians provincial funding cuts to education wouldn't show up in the classroom, says Quinte MPP Doug Rollins.

"In a frank exchange with about 250 high school students, teachers and public school board administrators from Belleville and the Quinte area, Rollins said Friday there is 'no question about it. There is going to be an effect in the classroom.'

"When pressed on the point before a student-run forum on education at Centennial Secondary School Friday, Rollins admitted the government had indeed lied.

"Student spokesman Marc Johnson, on hearing Rollins admit that cuts will show up at the classroom level, asked Rollins if he meant 'this government lied when it said it wouldn't affect the classroom.'

"'Yup,' said Rollins, 'on that part it did. Yes.'"

1710

Interjection: Refreshing truth.

Mr Bradley: Refreshing? Not from the opposition. It's coming from the government members, and I certainly agree with it.

But I must go on to say that I keep hearing the government use figures that they've been given that somehow the lion's share or a very significant share of the cost of education is outside the classroom. But what you are finding is indeed that a lot of it is related to the classroom. There are the teachers who are in the front line—and I want to go back to this because I think one of the problems with the government benches is that many people are living in the past when it comes to education. They're thinking of the education system when they went through it and the challenges that were there.

The other day, the member for Etobicoke West made I think a salient point. He said: "You know, in Toronto"—in his riding and other ridings in Toronto—"there are very special challenges to the school system because Toronto accepts most of the people coming from other countries, emigrating to Canada. Many of the people who come do not necessarily speak English as a first language and have a cultural adjustment to make and a linguistic adjustment to make," and that this presented a challenge to the education system that meant the system needed some assistance in meeting the needs of those children; so it isn't the way it was at one time.

I think that's a fair assessment. I suspect it's true of the greater Toronto area in particular as well, but even in our area. But because when we have emigration to our province it tends to be mostly to the Toronto area, I think there are those special problems. That's why I think when you believe you can have 40 kids in a classroom—you just can't do it today with the challenges we have to meet. Whether we like it or not, there are far more dysfunctional families out there where there isn't the stability at home that we would like to see if we had the best of all worlds. For that reason, more emphasis is placed on the education system to meet some of those needs. It's not a matter of choice; it's a matter of reality.

I notice that the student protests are growing across the province. The students themselves are beginning to see the potential impact of drastic education cuts and they recognize that it is going to affect the kind of education they'll have available to them.

What the province is doing is also making it rather ugly at the bargaining table, because what they're transferring to the local level is fewer dollars and drastically fewer dollars, and so they've got people fighting with one another. So the Catholic board wants to fight with the public board, the secondary people fight with the elementary people, people for junior kindergarten are competing with people who are in favour of adult education, and the government says, "Well, let them make the decision at the local level." Of course, the blame gets shifted there but the funds don't get shifted there, despite the fact that members of the Conservative Party said during the campaign more of the percentage of the cost of education should come from the provincial level and less from the property tax.

The problem of young teachers out there: I've been in the education system. I go to schools from time to time, I visit them. It's really interesting to see the aging of the school system, where you're having fewer and fewer really young teachers in the system. The best school system has a blend of senior teachers, those in the middle in terms of age, and younger teachers. What we're going to miss in our classrooms are those younger people who inject something new and different into the system. Unfortunately, many of those people are going out the door up to eight years. Hopefully, not all who have received notices—and they must receive those notices under the provisions of the Employment Standards Act—not all of those people are going to be gone from the system. But a good number are, and I think our students are the losers, and I think our society are the losers as a result.

There are teaching assistants out there. People will say, "Why do those teachers need assistants?" One of the reasons is because we now have integrated into the school system children with very special needs who previously were isolated into schools for themselves. I think of developmentally disadvantaged children, for instance, developmentally disabled individuals in our society who used to be placed in schools of their own or classrooms of their own who are now part of the regular school system and the regular classroom. So there is a requirement for assistants in that regard.

We also have adult education. The government tells us that we must have in this province a situation where people are learning new skills, where they're upgrading their skills, where they're upgrading their education so they can become meaningful participants in the workforce. If they are going to do that, they are going to require education even at an adult age. If you make it too expensive for them to do so, they're unable then to become part of the system, to come off the social assistance rolls and play the kind of role they want to play and others want them to play in our society.

I won't dwell excessively on junior kindergarten, because I have spoken on it before, other than to say that I happen to believe that in today's society and today's social structures at home and other places, junior kindergarten becomes much more important than it was in the past.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Then why didn't you enact it five years ago when you had the chance?

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, the member for Kitchener.

Mr Bradley: I'm interested in the interjection, because I think it's totally out to lunch. What did you say?

Mr Wettlaufer: It doesn't matter. I was ruled out of order.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Well, we did. It was done five years ago.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, address the Chair, please.

Mr Bradley: The question was—they have to know at the table if they want to write down the interjection—why didn't we do it five years ago. Well, it was put in place five years ago. Perhaps you were busy with something else at the time and did not see it happen, but it did happen five years ago, and it has been implemented since. The subsequent government implemented it.

I think if you look at all of the studies that are coming out now, you will see how important it is. If you said it 20 years ago to people, almost universally they would say, "We don't think it's important." Today, when you look objectively at the studies, I think you would come to the conclusion that it is.

Transportation is an important component. I think we can have some more cooperation than we've had in the past in transportation. That makes a lot of sense. I can't see why we have to have separate buses for people from different school systems. It doesn't make sense to me. I think we can solve that. That's a component of the bill with which I agree and I will be supportive of that. I think, really, if the government puts pressure on in that regard, I'm all for that and I'll be there to support it.

There are cleaning and maintenance jobs. There are certain requirements that must be met within a school system in terms of how clean the school system is, meeting all the health requirements and so on, so you have to be careful. You've already seen, over the last few years, a lot of those people out of the system.

We used to say there were a lot of superintendents and so on around. At one time, there may have been. The number is down considerably now. You have to remember that those superintendents have specific responsibilities within the education system. They aren't sitting on their fannies up at the education centre; they're out in the schools. They're working often 14 and 16 hours a day at their job. I know it's something that sounds good to attack it, but it's similar to what some of you people say, on the government side, when people criticize the upper executives of a business corporation. You will say, "You don't realize the job they do." But somehow when it gets into the public sector, you don't want to apply that, and I think it's important you do apply that.

I support—and I think everybody does—increased cooperation between boards of education. I think there's a lot of room for that. We're seeing some of it happen and I'm encouraged by that.

What I'm seeing in education today, with this bill in particular—more so with this bill than the other bills—is a changing attitude to education. I can remember Premier Davis and Premier Robarts, who were very pro-education, who I think had a lot of support across the board, both in the business community—

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): They didn't have it from you.

Mr Bradley: Well, Dr Stephenson was here today, for instance. She's down making a representation in the committee. I didn't always agree with Dr Stephenson, but I must say that some of her views on education were much more progressive than some of the ones I see today.

1720

Mr Conway: What? Say that again?

Mr Bradley: Well, than today.

I think of Bob Welch when he was Minister of Education. I think of Tom Wells when he was Minister of Education. Those individuals, all Conservatives, were not anti-education, were not anti-public sector. They saw the importance of it and I think had that sense of common sense and balance that we don't see today.

A number of people out there believe that grade 13, which you want to abolish—it seems to me that every government is abolishing grade 13—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It's OAC now.

Mr Bradley: I'm corrected by somebody who's smarter than I am, who says it's OAC now. I think I knew that.

What should happen is that it should be optional, as far as I'm concerned, so that those students who are able to make it through in a four-year period and even take their OACs may do so and others who have work requirements or special needs and wish to take the additional time can do so. I think that has a lot of common sense in it.

I think special education is going to lose out. Again, Dr Stephenson and subsequent people in education had a feeling for and an importance placed on special education, to meet the special needs of people in our system.

I want to comment on draft GLGs. I don't know what "draft general legislative grants" are. I always thought you had those grants and they were established. But apparently the minister mentioned those today. I only mention those in passing because they are passing strange to many of us.

I happen to believe that education is an investment in the future. We in the opposition, with this Bill 34, over the past several weeks have fought for and have now achieved some hearings outside Toronto. It took a lot to do it. The government has its position, its position being that it does not want hearings outside Toronto during a session of the Legislature. We have made a compromise which allows for some of those hearings during what is called constituency week in centres in different parts of Ontario. I think that's positive; I want to be positive about that. I think we've come to a reasonable compromise, and that's how this Legislature should work. But I'll tell you, it took a lot of persuading to do that, because the initial position of the government was that there should be hearings only in Toronto.

For those of us who are outside of Toronto, you know how annoying that can be to your local people, that they always have to come to Toronto to make their representations and can't do it in the context of their own communities. But the government wishes to move this bill through rather quickly, so it does not want to have those hearings during the summer recess when they would be most appropriate.

When I look at the bills the government brings forward, I believe the College of Teachers bill is unnecessary, an unnecessary thing to become involved in. When I look at the other bill, on testing, I know establishing testing is popular and I think there's a fair consensus in the province that people want to see it. There's some resistance within the education system, but there's a fair consensus out there that people want to see some province-wide testing to see how the system is working, in a diagnostic sense rather than a punitive sense. I think that does make some sense.

This bill is not supportable in its present state and I doubt in its final state by members of the opposition, because of what I think it's trying to achieve. If you ask overall, "Do we want to see savings effected?"—yes. If you consult the people at the local level, you will find, when they're speaking to the province, they will give you suggestions on a provincial basis of how you can effect some reasonable savings. But we have to remember that education is an investment in our future, and unfortunately we are sacrificing it because we're going to have drastic cuts and fast cuts simply to serve a tax cut which is going to benefit the rich and the privileged most of all in this province, and I lament that fact this afternoon in this Legislature.

Mr Marchese: I stand to support much of what the member for St Catharines has said today. It's based on the feeling and the view he and I share around many of the things he has talked about, in particular junior kindergarten. Although the member for St Catharines didn't speak as much today as he has done at other times, it remains for me one of the most important things this government is doing through this bill that is bad.

Junior kindergarten, for me, is vital in bringing about greater equality for all children in the school system. As we know, students come into the educational system unequal, and junior kindergarten is an attempt to bring about that equality for all students, but particularly those students who come from backgrounds where they don't have the same opportunities, intellectual, emotional at times, and economic. So this is an attempt to bring about, in those formative years, the kind of quality and equality that we desperately need, particularly as this government cuts deeper and deeper into areas of concern to many of the people in Ontario.

It takes literally \$400 million—\$400 million before; annualized it's \$1 billion. It's going to have dramatic effects in the classroom on the teacher and on the students. We know that. It will affect every sector of the educational system and every part of the classroom you can think of. It can't but hurt in every possible way you can think of.

You're not being accountable. The member for Mississauga South says, "We want to be accountable." How are you doing that, except by forcing boards of education to cut \$400 million away from their budgets? Is that accountability when you force others to do the dirty job for you? You steal \$40 million or \$50 million from Metropolitan Toronto, raised through education taxes to teach students in the Metropolitan board. It's illegal, it's wrong. Through this bill you're hurting every child and every teacher in the Ontario system.

Mr O'Toole: I was watching the member for St Catharines speaking while I was in my office preparing a report for this evening. Also, further in response to the member for Fort York speaking to equity in junior kindergarten, I think the importance there is that Bill 34 allows the boards to make decisions along with their union partners in education, the teacher unions.

First of all, there is funding. The funding is schedule 3 funding. Also, they could look at using differentiated staff. That's staff. Early childhood education is a certified teaching program or methodology. That is one of the options. Three boards in my riding have already chosen to continue junior kindergarten with the new funding structure. So I think there are a series of options available.

The member for St Catharines talks about the whole issue of equity and fairness. I think this is about fairness. When you have some boards spending \$4,000 per year per student and others spending as much as \$9,000, is that equity? It's really about equity. This bill talks about providing funding at the student and classroom level.

I just want to repeat what the present interim leader, Mr Wildman from Algoma, said in 1995 in the Sault Star:

"We're committed to ensuring more education funding goes directly into the classrooms"—sounds like us—"to benefit students. Our reforms include a province-wide curriculum, annual testing in reading, writing, math, better teacher training, computers in the classroom and special help for the youngest learners."

That sounds like a lift exactly from what we're doing. This is from Mr Wildman from Algoma and it's June 3, 1995, in the Sault Star. So I don't see what the problem is. Education needs to be changed. Your leader said it and we're doing it.

Mr Conway: I want to congratulate my colleague from St Catharines on his sombre, serious, if at times sonorous, speech this afternoon. Much more sober than I would be on the subject, but he brings long experience as a teacher to these matters.

I want to just make a couple of comments in this ongoing debate. I was talking to some people who have this afternoon met with Ministry of Education officials who are out in the land. They don't know anything of what kind of deals the minister is cutting. When asked today, ministry officials knew nothing about the regulations that the minister is applying in places like Haliburton. That comes as of 1:30 this afternoon. Maybe they are the only ministry officials out in the field who don't know what it is the minister is doing in terms of policy.

Mrs Marland: Regulations for the undue burden grant.

Mr Conway: The member for Mississauga South says it's the undue burden grant. I suspect it is. All I'm reporting to the House is that the minister's own officials are out in the community today and they don't know what guidance to provide. That doesn't surprise me at all. I know exactly the kind of fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants policy this Minister of Education is pursuing.

1730

I want to say something else to my friend from Mississauga South and the other Tories. As a veteran member here, I find it passing strange to see Mrs Marland and others attacking the system that Bill Davis

and Ed Stewart built. When I heard the member for Mississauga South—I see the squire of Carleton throwing up his hands in some disgust. These new Tories stand up here now, attacking the apparatchiks. They attack all the—

Interjection: It's their own grave.

Mr Conway: Listen, we found out, I want to say—

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Bradley: Rodger Allan.

Mr Conway: Rodger Allan, people like that, all of these directors, all of these apparatchiks they now want to attack—Mrs Marland, Mrs Witmer, Mr Harris—are the very people they incubated, the very people they sponsored. It is a real paradox to hear them now attack the house they built.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time is up. Further questions or comments?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I would like to compliment the member for St Catharines on his speech in the House because I think he raises the point that really—

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments, the member for Cochrane South. The member for Cochrane South, you just now got recognized. Perhaps you would like to begin again.

Mr Bisson: I will try it again. I would like to congratulate the member for St Catharines for the work he's done over the years here in the House, speaking out on behalf of the communities of interest when it comes to education in this province. He speaks from a certain amount of knowledge. As a former teacher and a person involved in education for a lot of years, he has a certain understanding.

I think the point he raises, which is the most important point that the members of the government should be hearing, is that it is amazing that members of the government and members of cabinet could come to this House and basically say, "Our system of education stinks." These are the people who are supposed to be in charge.

I guess it isn't amazing when you compare it to what the Minister of Education said way back when he first got sworn into cabinet and met with his bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education for the first time. This is the minister who said, "I'm going to create a crisis, and by creating that crisis I will be able to have the force and the support I need to make the kinds of changes to education that I want to make."

All we're seeing in this bill, as in everything else we've see up to now, has nothing to do with common sense, as the member for St Catharines says; it has everything to do with nonsense. These people on the government side of the House do not believe in a system of public education. They do not believe in public services whatsoever. What they are intent on doing is simply to destroy the system of public education that we have now so that we can go back to the good old days when we had a caste system, where if you came from a family with some bucks you did well and if you came from a family of working stiffs you didn't do so well.

I say to members on the other side of the House, shame on you. We members of the opposition, the New Democratic Party and the Liberals, will fight you every

inch of the way because you are dismantling the system of education that took 120 years to build.

Mr Bradley: I'd like to respond. I thank the members for their interventions. I think all of them were very helpful in this debate and that this debate has been healthy for our education system. It's one which should be held both in this Legislature and across the province.

I want to add something that I didn't say before which shows some cooperation between boards of education. In St Catharines, under the auspices of the Lincoln County Board of Education and the Lincoln Roman Catholic school board, we have two schools on one property. One is called Pine Grove and one is called Michael J. Brennan. One is under the auspices of the Roman Catholic school board and one is under the auspices of the public school board. How marvellous it is to see those two schools working together. They use a joint plant, the building, there is a joint field and there's a lot of cooperation between the two. That is very beneficial. There is a lot of opposition to that among those who don't like that kind of cooperation, but it's just one example of how boards of education can work well together.

Second, I was happy that my colleague the member for Renfrew North made reference to Rodger Allan. Rodger Allan was the director of education in Lincoln county when I was a teacher in Lincoln county. I had a good deal of respect for him. He had a lot of friends within the Progressive Conservative government. I believe he worked for the Progressive Conservative candidate in his riding in the last campaign. Mr Allan is a person who worked hard to build a strong education system. While I cannot speak for him, one would anticipate that there must be some dismay when people of this ilk see what is happening to education today, because he believed that education was an investment in the future and a good place to make a financial investment.

Last, I would say our education system allows us to provide equality of opportunity for all, and I have a fear that we're moving away from that.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to get up this afternoon and put a few thoughts on the record re this very important piece of legislation that is, just in case somebody out there doesn't understand, the infamous toolbox the Minister of Education has delivered to the people of Ontario to gut the education system as we know it and do untold damage in a myriad of ways.

First of all, I could certainly identify with some of the comments of the member for St Catharines as he spoke about the frustration of the people in his jurisdiction when things happen that affect us directly and we have some real concern about and we don't get a chance to have any real input into.

We as a party were negotiating with the government to have this bill, this piece of legislation taken out across the province, and most particularly to my part of the province, northern Ontario, because distances are so far and the cost is so great to have people come all the way down to Toronto here for 15 or 20 minutes to put on the record—

Interjection: That's big bucks.

Mr Martin: That's right, it's big bucks—their thoughts and concerns and ask the questions they need to

ask as they try to get their heads around some of what this government is proposing to do. Where I can identify with the member for St Catharines re some of the concern he has, I think it's doubly important when it's from northern Ontario, because of the distances we have to travel.

I met with some folks in the Sault a week or so ago around this piece of legislation, and they expressed to me some real grave concern and were, with me, very upset the government wasn't going to entertain the possibility of going up north, waiting for the summer—what's the big rush here?—until we had the luxury of the time that would be required to do a real good job of that, to travel to some of the larger centres, like Sault Ste Marie, where I come from, and perhaps some of the smaller communities, Kapuskasing and Cochrane North and Hearst, places where real people live that are going to be affected very directly, sometimes in a way that causes some double jeopardy as the reality of this bill unfolds.

Today that's really not what I wanted to talk about, although, because I followed the member for St Catharines, a very dedicated and committed Liberal in this place, I did want to just for a minute suggest to him that the next time he gets up and speaks to us about things like education and the cutting this government is doing, he might elaborate a bit on some of what was in the red book during the last provincial election on how they were going to deal with the cuts they were proposing by way of taxes and the downsizing they were going to do, and the number of civil servants they were going to lay off, and how that would be done in a way that would not be hurtful to communities like Sault Ste Marie and St Catharines and Kapuskasing and Hearst and all of those wonderful places people live in this province.

Mr Bisson: And Timmins.

Mr Martin: And Timmins too. I want to today, though, in the few minutes I have, talk a bit about the impact of this onslaught on education re our position as a jurisdiction in the world that wants to compete for investment and compete for business.

I also want to talk for a few minutes about the impact this will have on communities and how what has already been done to communities by way of some of the other reductions this government has imposed is going to, in the larger context, diminish the effect of education on our young people and the contribution it can make to our jurisdiction being more competitive and having a future.

I also want to talk and focus somewhat specifically on teachers and the fact that we will have less of them and how valuable they are and how this is, in many significant ways, an attack on them. I want to talk about specific programs that are going to be affected, that are going to be hit hard, that are going to have negative repercussions: junior kindergarten, special education and adult education, just to name a few.

To begin with, I sat, as did some of my colleagues, with some members of this House on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs as we heard people come forward and talk to us in preparation for the budget that will be coming down in a couple of weeks, which will have some major impact on all of us. They said, everybody who came, and we all agreed, that it was really important that Ontario—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie, could you just take your seat for a moment. I'm really having trouble hearing the member for Sault Ste Marie, so I would ask members to please keep your conversations down. Thank you.

1740

Mr Martin: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I would hope the members of this House would be interested in what I have to say, as I am when they get up and speak, and have that kind of respect, because I not only speak for myself here, I speak for the constituents I represent, those wonderful people who live and work and play in northern Ontario, and in Sault Ste Marie most specifically.

As I was saying, it's really important that Ontario continue to do those things that are required to make sure that we are in fact competitive in the global economy that we're in today and that's coming at us.

Where other jurisdictions are competitive because they rely on child labour, rely on an environment of low wages and little or no regulation, in Ontario our competitive edge is based on things like the really efficient and first-class infrastructure that we have in place and that allows the movement of goods in a way that is quick and safe, and on the buildings that we have to house head offices and workers who work in plants and in industry. We have a competitive advantage because of the health and social service system we have in place. A company coming to Ontario, for example, doesn't have to worry about the cost of a very expensive health package to cover the workers who work for them. We have in place a first-class health care system that costs significantly less per person to have in place and to assist with that all-important bottom line.

Of course, in the context of today's discussion, we have in place in Ontario a first-class education system, an education system that works for people, that works for everybody. We so often hear our education system compared with education systems in other jurisdictions. One of them is Japan. We all know—anybody who's heard that argument and looked into this—that in Japan only those people who qualify get to go to secondary school and beyond to post-secondary. In Ontario everybody goes to school, because we know that in Ontario the greatest resource we have is our people, and we maximize the potential for our people to contribute and to participate and to be part of the economy by providing them with a first-class education.

If we don't give them from day one the best that we have to offer, then we do them a disservice, we do ourselves a disservice, we do the whole community of Ontario a disservice, and in fact I would suggest, because Ontario is so important economically to the whole of Canada, we do the whole of Canada a very major disservice.

It's really important that we continue to maintain the system we have in place, and not only maintain it but enhance it, as we were doing when we were in government, making sure that programs like junior kindergarten—that's well-documented as a very important start for young children and not only impacts on them now, as it gives them the socialization skills and that very important first start in life, but will affect them all the way through

their life. So things like junior kindergarten become very important.

It's interesting. When I sat on the committee that looked at estimates in this House not so long ago, I had an opportunity to speak to the Minister of Education. He challenged me on some of what I was saying by way of suggesting that we as a government, and those of us who do not support the agenda the present government is rolling out, were mortgaging our present on the backs of the children of our future. I suggest to him that he is wrong and that what they are doing is taking away any future the children of today will have, because we're not going to give them the education they require.

I don't think there's any of us around here who hasn't over the last few months had at least one or two, if not a half a dozen, people into our office to talk to us about the impact of the cuts on education, both at an elementary and secondary level and at a post-secondary level, and the inability of their children to continue on in some cases; the tremendous increase that we're going to see in tuition fees and no change significantly in the availability of OSAP so that our kids can continue.

I would suggest that if a study was done you'd find that a whole lot of our young people in colleges today are having to quit because they don't have the support they need. It's becoming ever more costly. However, we're talking here today about Bill 34, and that has more specifically to do with the elementary and secondary system.

I want just for a few minutes to focus on education within the context of the community and the impact of some of the decisions that have been made so far by this government on the community as it relates to schools. We know from some of the studies and some of the work that's been done on the impact of good health on a student's ability to learn and to do well in school, and the decision that was made by this government in July by way of the cutback in money to the poorest among us, to those folks who find themselves unfortunately having to rely on social assistance for their livelihood, that significantly diminishes a family's ability to look after children in a way that speaks to nourishing food, warm clothing and quality housing so that when they come to school they're ready to learn.

If a child comes to school and he's hungry, he presents in a way that makes it very difficult for not only the child but also the teacher and can, if not looked after in a meaningful way, also present some problems for all the other children in the classroom and indeed for the community.

So it's in the context of children not having enough to eat and sometimes coming to school without proper clothing and perhaps from a home that doesn't have all the things that are needed in it for a dignified quality of life. You put that in the context of the diminishing services that are now in communities to support families who are struggling for one reason or another and you begin to see the problem that is coming to the fore and presenting itself every day at the doorstep of the schools as school officials begin to have to deal with this more and more.

I suggest to you that taking money out of the system, which is what Bill 34 gives school boards the ability to do, is going to diminish even more our ability as a society to educate, to have an educated workforce and to have people in it who are able to contribute and to maximize their potential; to continue to have Ontario be in the forefront of almost every sphere of life around the world and to be able to compete economically with other jurisdictions, not to mention the impact that the downsizing and the cutting of transfer payments to school boards and to municipalities will have on the property tax system and the amount of money that will take out of the pockets of ordinary citizens and their ability to support—

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Cut the grants and taxes are going to go up.

1750

Mr Martin: That's right, exactly. Cut the grants and taxes go up. I know in my own community, this is the first year in probably I would say four years—that was while we were government—they're going to have to increase property taxes. The separate school board, the public school board and the city are this year contemplating, for the first time in about four years, having to raise taxes. That's having a major impact on our community as well.

I want to talk for a few minutes about teachers and the impact this cut, this reduction in the amount of money going to school boards will have on teachers. As I said in my opening remarks, we have an excellent education system. We have an education system that's second to none anywhere, I suggest, in the world. It has its problems, there are challenges—there always are challenges when you have a world that's changing as rapidly and as radically as the world we live in—but it is nevertheless an excellent system.

It's excellent because we have excellent teachers. We have people working in our school system who have done the work that's required to make themselves the best they can be. I think I can speak to that with some qualification because I was a trustee for a few years before I got this job and, in my role as trustee, had some direct contact with the school system in my community and rubbed shoulders on various committees and in various ways with teachers in my city. I found them always professional, always ready to go the extra distance and always having the best interests of students front and centre in the things they think about and the things they do and the way they operate within our community.

What this piece of legislation is going to do is take away from them the ability to do what they do best. As a matter of fact, you think about the commitment and the investment these people have put into being good teachers; you think about the years that went into the education they require and, for so many of them, the hours after school taking extra courses and professional development; the marking and the time they spend with students, both for the students' benefit and for their own benefit, because they're learning when they're doing that; and the hours they spend during the summer away from their families. Oftentimes in my community, to take some of the courses you need to take as a teacher to upgrade your skills, you need to leave Sault Ste Marie and come

to Toronto or London or some of the larger centres, and you sacrifice valuable family time so you can be the best you can be.

This piece of legislation we're looking at today here is going to see fewer and fewer of those people able to work in their chosen profession. You're going to see communities not being able to take advantage of the skills they have to offer. On one end, you're going to see seasoned teachers, teachers who have been around for a long time, teachers who are qualified, who have years of experience, taking early retirement packages and moving on.

It wasn't so long ago that we saw that as a good thing because we knew young teachers were coming in at the bottom end, but today, because of the cuts we're getting, that's not happening. We're not getting the same number of young teachers into the system and so it's not working the way it used to work. Because of what this government is doing, we're diminishing the ability of this wonderful profession to exercise its skill and to participate in the development of our young people and, through our young people, the development of our communities.

Just for a few minutes, because that's about all I have left, I want to talk about the fact that slowly but surely we're going to see the disappearance of junior kindergarten, a well-documented program that this government, without any substantiation, without any impact study, has decided is not important, is not worth investing in, is not worth putting the money into. It's gone.

Special education: We discovered, I think it was in the early 1980s, that it was important to put extra resources into making sure that those kids who are challenged in particular ways have the resources they need so they can overcome some of the challenges they face and be able to participate more fully in the communities where they live and work and play. Special education—diminished. Special education in some instances, particularly in small communities where you don't have the property tax base—gone.

Adult education, at a time when more and more adults are finding themselves out of work and need to have the opportunity to get back to school so they can be retrained and enter the new workplace with new skills—gone, diminished, out the door. Speaking from the advantage of a medium-sized community in northern Ontario and speaking on behalf of my colleague from Cochrane North, places like Hearst and Kapuskasing, those communities, even more than places like Metro Toronto, are going to suffer because of the diminishing ability of school boards to offer adult education.

I, with my colleagues, suggest that Bill 34 is bad medicine for the province of Ontario.

Mr Bisson: I would like to congratulate my friend from Sault Ste Marie for the wonderful job he did. As the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Education for some five years, I'm sure the comments he made here were well shared among all the members of this House.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Though I differed in some aspects of what he said, the member for Sault Ste Marie is always, in my view, thoughtful and worthy of listening to, and I appreciate that. What he says

to the government is important. Bill 34 is not a bill about substantive reform of education in this province. Bill 34 will harm education. Bill 34 is forcing school boards to make difficult decisions that they shouldn't have to make, and the government itself backed off on making many of those decisions and didn't provide leadership in any way, shape or form.

The government of Ontario should be concerned about the quality of education offered to students in this province. That should be the first concern. They've demonstrated through Bill 34 that they're not. They've demonstrated that they're prepared to undo many of the great reforms achieved over many years by many governments, including Progressive Conservative governments. The passage of Bill 34 today I regret, we regret, and I congratulate my colleague from Sault Ste Marie for his eloquent defence of education in this great province.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Further statements and comments? The member for Sault Ste Marie has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I really have nothing else to offer. I just want to thank my colleagues for their support.

The Speaker: Further debate? There's no further debate. Mr Snobelen has moved second reading of Bill 34. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. Do we have consent for a five-minute bell? Agreed.

The division bells rang from 1759 to 1804.

The Speaker: Will the members take their seats, please.

We're voting on the motion standing in Mr Snobelen's name, Bill 34. All those in favour will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Preston, Peter
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bassett, Isabel	Hamick, Charles	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Boushy, Dave	Hodgson, Chris	Saunderson, William
Brown, Jim	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Bert	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Ron	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Brenda	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Eves, Ernie L.	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Ford, Douglas B.	Murdoch, Bill	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fox, Gary	Newman, Dan	Villeneuve, Noble
Froese, Tom	O'Toole, John	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Palladini, Al	
Grimmett, Bill	Pettit, Trevor	

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Morin, Gilles E.
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Boyd, Marion	Hoy, Pat	Pouliot, Gilles
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Laughren, Floyd	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud
Cooke, David S.	McGuinty, Dalton	Wood, Len
Cordiano, Joseph	McLeod, Lyn	
Crozier, Bruce	Miclash, Frank	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 61; the nays are 37.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): No, Mr Speaker; the social development committee.

The Speaker: The social development committee.

EDUCATION FINANCING

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Fort William has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to her question given yesterday by the Minister of Education and Training. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I have dissatisfaction with a great many of the answers, in fact with every answer this minister gives, and I have dissatisfaction with what this minister is doing, and not the least of my dissatisfactions is with this destructive bill that has just received second reading in this House.

But my specific notice of dissatisfaction was with the non-response I got when I asked the minister yesterday about a special deal that had been worked out for the Haliburton board of education. The facts in this situation remain indisputable after some 24 hours. The Haliburton board of education was going to get a \$1.2-million reduction—that's a 50% reduction—in its grant support. The Minister of Natural Resources, who is also the member for Victoria-Haliburton, announced to his board that he was successful in getting that draconian cut reduced to some \$315,000—a big change: \$1.2 million reduced to \$315,000.

The Minister of Education, when I asked him yesterday about this grant reduction, knew nothing, simply had no answers, didn't provide any information and just said there was no special deal. That was the first question in the House.

Later in the afternoon somebody did get a note to him. I want to acknowledge that. The minister was given some information after his staff scrambled to bring him up to date on what was happening in his ministry. He found indeed something had been done in Haliburton, and that

he would now magnanimously review the grants that had been given to other boards of education to make sure that every board had been treated fairly and equitably. Amen to that, but one does wonder why you need to be reviewing grants which had just been announced the week before. Does the minister somehow think this was a gigantic mistake that had happened? I wonder how many other mistakes he thinks have happened in the grant announcements and the grant reductions he made to boards across this province just last week.

1810

We have never seen anything like this before. Boards have never faced the kinds of cuts in grants, in support, that this government has introduced with its 9% across-the-board cuts and the billion-dollar impact in grant reductions on public boards alone in one single year.

The Haliburton board was about to face a 50% cut in its grant funding. No wonder they were facing an undue burden. No board could cope with a 50% cut in its grants. The question is, how was it going to happen in the first place, and how did this Minister of Education not know that the Haliburton board was about to be whacked with a 50% cut in grants? Why was it necessary for the Minister of Natural Resources, his colleague, to discover this and to have to go to him to get him to fix what was clearly an impossible situation?

Even more important, what happens to other boards that are facing cuts that are an undue burden? They've never faced these kinds of cuts before, and every board knows the level of cuts is intolerable if you want to protect classroom education.

So who's going to get their problem mitigated, if I can use the minister's word? The minister said today that the grants announced were draft grants. Now, we've never heard of a draft grant before either. Normally the grants are given out and that's what a board has to live with. Are the boards invited to consult on these draft grants? If the boards don't like them, are the boards able to come and say, "Minister, we don't think we can handle this"?

The Minister of Education has said over and over his cuts are not going to hurt classroom education. So if a board comes back and says, "Minister, that was simply not true; this cut is hurting classroom education," will it be able to get its grant cut mitigated so that in fact that cut is not going to put teachers out of work and increase class sizes and hurt classroom education and cancel junior kindergarten?

The minister says he has a criterion for consideration, that any board facing a cut of more than 15% will have its cut capped, but we don't know where that came from. I don't understand why, if that is something that has existed before, nobody in the Ministry of Education could tell us about it.

The fact is we've never faced this situation before. There have been rare occasions in the past where an industry closes, it's the only industry in the town, there's an undue burden, and there's relief. We've never had a \$5-million slush fund before that the Minister of Education gets to allocate to whomever gets to him.

The central question here is, why did the Minister of Natural Resources have access to information about the grants to the Haliburton County Board of Education

before those grants were announced? Why was he able to get his grant cut reduced before the grants were announced? We need to know who else had that information—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired. The minister, up to five minutes.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): In answer to the question from the Leader of the Opposition, I'll answer the question, although I want to point out, obviously, to everyone in the chamber and to the Speaker that if there is some reason why we're here this evening because a question was not answered properly, sometimes inside the editorial pieces in the question it's difficult to understand exactly what's been asked. If the member opposite is asking the same question as yesterday, although I'm not sure, that question was, has the ministry made a deal with the Haliburton board? The answer to that question is no, the same answer as it was yesterday.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Same answer as yesterday.

As far as a note being passed to me yesterday, I want to compliment the member opposite on the imagination that was used to generate that particular interpretation.

The ministry obviously has been talking to a variety of boards, many boards, across the province, particularly the small boards because, as members opposite I hope will recognize and I hope that they'll recognize this fact in our education system, small boards of under 10,000 have fewer chances to work in the time frames and to mitigate their costs. They also can be affected by assessment, they can be affected by enrolment, in ways that are not affected by large boards. I hope that they'll recognize that basic fact of our system.

After the ministry sends out its estimates of student population, of assessment and the GLGs, we get confirmation back from the boards, which we're now in the process of doing, of those estimates, we will have a look and make sure that those small boards are able to respond to the savings that we would like to find outside of the classroom in the education system.

What seems to me to be incredible is this: If there is some question—although I can't understand personally why there would be some question—about regulation 307 in the Education Act, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition could turn to the critic of this file, the member for Ottawa Centre, and inquire of him what happened in 1989 when there was a regulation 307 undue burden grant for \$2.7 million made to the Ottawa-Carleton board in his area. I believe that the member opposite was a minister of the government at that time and obviously was very familiar at that time with reg 307, with undue burdens, and with making sure that boards that were affected by the GLGs were not unduly affected and were not carrying too big of a burden.

So some 30 times over the last 10 years governments have moved to make sure that boards were not adversely affected by GLG announcements. This government, I can assure the member opposite, as I did yesterday, will make sure that no board, particularly the small boards, are affected adversely by the GLG process.

I thank the chamber for this opportunity, Mr Speaker, you for this opportunity, to answer the question once again.

The Speaker: There being no further matters to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1817.

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Wednesday 24 April 1996

Mercredi 24 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 avril 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Workplace safety and workers are important. On Sunday, April 28, the labour movement in Sudbury will honour those who were killed, injured or disabled in the workplace. Union workers all over will be remembering the terrible sacrifices made by thousands of fellow workers. In doing so, it is hoped that everyone will reaffirm their commitment to taking the necessary steps to end carnage in the workplace.

The Sudbury District Labour Council celebration will take place in the lobby of Civic Square starting at 10 am.

The United Steelworkers of America, Local 6500, will conduct its ceremony in the Steelworkers Hall at 12 noon. Guest speakers will be Gerry Loughheed Jr, Leo Gerard and Julien Dionne. Sudbury was one of the first regions, if not the first region, to declare April 28 as an official day of mourning in Canada.

Latest statistics indicate the number of time-loss injuries in the mining sector was 5,582 in Canada, 673 occurring in Ontario. There were 145 fatalities in the mining section, 35 occurring in Ontario, for the 1994 work year.

Out of respect for the dignity of those who have been killed, injured and disabled and the surviving members of their families who have lost loved ones, we ask this government to reconsider its decision to remove the mandatory requirement for inquests into deaths which occur in mines and on construction sites. Show you care for workers and workplace safety.

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today to give recognition and compliment to all those who work in the public service of this province, and I mean every level of government and every transfer agency or organization in Ontario, those who work in the very honourable and noble field of public service.

You in many significant ways make our communities what they are. You are the health care workers, social workers, educators, snowplow operators, jail guards, police officers, researchers, secretaries etc. Yes, those of you so often abusively referred to as bureaucrats are indeed the backbone, that very essential soft underbelly, the very stability of our communities, and I and my

colleagues in the New Democratic Party caucus want to say thank you.

We also want you to know we understand and empathize with the great anxiety and sorrow you are now feeling as you personally or your fellow workers or some family member are told that under the leadership of the present government you are redundant; you are not needed; we can do better with less. That is not my sentiment. We need what you do more than ever before and recognize the very valuable contribution, often at great sacrifice to personal life and family, you make to the life of our communities.

You are our friends and family. You are our neighbours and colleagues. Government and those who work in it are a fundamental determinant of health, both economic and social. We salute you.

ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Today marks the 81st anniversary of the Armenian genocide. On Sunday I had the honour of representing the Premier in participating in the commemoration of the massacre with the Armenian National Committee of Toronto.

Eighty-one years ago today, the deportation and mass killing of Armenian citizens began, and when the bloodshed was over, 1.5 million people had died in the genocide. It was on this day that Armenian leaders were arrested and killed at the order of the Turkish government. This massacre marked the beginning of an attempt to eliminate the Armenian population from the territory ruled by the Turkish government. Few people today remember this holocaust, although it rivals Hitler's worst abuses in its scale and scope.

The Armenians are an ancient national group whose ancestral home was located roughly between the present-day Iran and the former Soviet Union on the east and on the north. In the past 2,500 years, five different Armenian kingdoms existed and the land has been ruled by different oppressors throughout history.

On the anniversary of this tragedy, I rise in this House to remember the people who have lost their lives and grieve with their families who are dedicated to keeping their memories alive.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I too want to join with my colleague from Etobicoke-Rexdale and others in marking the 81st anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

As you pointed out, on April 24, 1915, Armenians were deported and mass killings began. I don't think the Armenian genocide has left a single Armenian family untouched, as over 1.5 million Armenians died. In 1980,

as I think many members will know, the province of Ontario passed a resolution asking the government of Canada to mark April 24 as a day of remembrance for the Armenian community and to officially recognize the Armenian genocide as a historic event. It is only through official recognition that events like this are fully understood. It's only through official recognition that events like the Armenian genocide and indeed the Nazi Holocaust are recognized and that we ensure they never happen again.

I know many members are familiar with the words of Reverend Martin Niemoeller, who said:

"In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."

On this anniversary, I think it's important that all of us speak up to ensure this never happens again.

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MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES REGIONAL OFFICE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I'd like to direct my statement today to the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development and Mines, Chris Hodgson.

Yesterday in the House I turned over to you hundreds of letters from the people of Cochrane concerning the relocation of the Ministry of Natural Resources regional office from Cochrane to the city of Timmins, creating a loss of 42 jobs.

The decision to do this was dropped on the town of Cochrane in a fax, with no forewarning, no consultation, no concern for the people involved. Fifty-five per cent of your ministry's staff reductions will occur in southern Ontario; 45% will occur in northern Ontario. Asking 10% of the population to absorb 45% of your cuts is grossly unfair.

The town of Kapuskasing, at a meeting last week, passed a resolution indicating its concern for this situation and deploring the fact that smaller municipalities are being subjected to such measures. Your Premier will be receiving a copy of this resolution.

I would like to ask that you reconsider your decision, Minister, and meet with the people of Cochrane so that you're fully aware of the impact of your cuts on this community. Removing 42 jobs from Cochrane when this community is also expected to absorb cuts from other ministries in your government is more than a community of 4,600 can bear.

GREAT RIDE TO BEAT CANCER

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I rise today to inform the House that on Sunday, April 28, 1996, the Canadian Cancer Society will be holding its annual Great Ride to Beat Cancer in our area of Durham region. I am proud to be the spokesperson for this bike-a-thon to raise money to help beat cancer.

The event will commence at Durham College in north Oshawa and will feature three different bicycle tracks: 27 kilometres, 15 kilometres, and this year at my request, a kids' track in the parking lot. There are great prizes to be won for those who collect the most pledges, including adult bicycles, children's bicycles, T-shirts and other prizes. Travelodge's famous Sleepy Bear will be on hand to entertain the little ones. This will provide a wonderful family opportunity to participate as a family in an important cause.

All those interested in participating are encouraged to obtain pledge sheets from my office or the Canadian Cancer Society. You don't have to be a great cyclist to participate.

The date is Sunday, April 28, 1996. Rides begin between 9 am and 1 pm. The location is the north parking lot, Durham College, Conlin Road and Simcoe Street North, in Oshawa.

Helmets are required for participants 18 and under and strongly recommended for all riders.

It's a day of family fun to help a great cause in Durham region.

SUPER CITIES WALK FOR MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am rising in the Legislative Assembly today to pay tribute to the hundreds of individuals who participated in the Super Cities Walk for Multiple Sclerosis in St Catharines on Sunday, April 21, and the thousands of people who sponsored walkers in this fund-raising effort.

I was privileged to be asked to be the honorary chairperson of the 1996 walk and to work with so many dedicated individuals who were responsible for the organization and operation of this most worthwhile endeavour.

Multiple sclerosis is the most common disease of the central nervous system of young adults, striking people most often between the ages of 20 and 40. It can cause loss of balance and coordination, impaired speech, extreme fatigue, double vision and even paralysis, and it affects 50,000 Canadians.

It was extremely encouraging to see people of all ages contributing through their walking and sponsorships to the raising of funds for research to find the cause, cure and prevention of multiple sclerosis.

Over 800 walkers raised at least \$92,000, and for this our community, and in particular victims of multiple sclerosis, are grateful to them, to the organizers and to the sponsors of this outstanding event.

Across Ontario, people who care about people gave their time and effort to the battle against a disease which has struck far too many, and these participants have demonstrated the care and concern that is so prevalent in the people of our province and our community.

ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I join today with my colleagues the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale and Scarborough-Agincourt to remember all the men and women and children who lost their lives during the

Armenian genocide on April 24, 1915. Many Armenians were deported and there were widespread mass killings.

Over 1.5 million Armenians died at that time, and as my colleagues pointed out, in 1980 the province of Ontario passed a resolution asking the government of Canada to mark April 24 as the day of remembrance for the Armenian community and asking as well that that day be officially recognized as the Armenian genocide, as a historical event.

This is a very, very important day to Armenians and I would say to all of us here in this room and to all the people of Ontario to never forget these kinds of atrocities. It's an anniversary that we need to be reminded of year after year, because sometimes in our daily dealings with the events that are happening closer to home, we forget that such things have happened in our past and indeed in some countries continue to happen. I join with my colleagues today to extend my sympathies to all of the families who have been involved in this terrible atrocity.

PERRY STREET ARENA

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise in the House today to bid farewell to the end of a sports era in the city of Woodstock. This past weekend, hundreds of people from across Oxford county and this province congregated in Woodstock to attend the reunion and the closing of the Perry Street Arena.

Originally opened on January 6, 1914, this arena is a large first-rate facility, one of the best in the province at the time. It opened to much fanfare and the headlines in Woodstock's daily newspaper, the *Sentinel Review*, on January 7, read, "St Michael's Opens Up the Grand New Arena."

Although Woodstock senior OHA team lost the opener 16-4 to the St Michael's team from Toronto, that game marked a new beginning for a long and proud tradition of first-rate sports teams in the city. The opening ushered in an era in which thousands of people filed into downtown core to participate, to view or orchestrate many exciting hockey games, ice skating carnivals and various other special events.

In 1914, the Perry Street Arena also was the only one of two arenas in Canada to boast an automatic stop-time clock. This feature added to the excitement of the game as seconds ticked away until the closing buzzer rang and many exciting finishes. The cost of watching one of these games ranged from 25 cents to 35 cents in 1914, and was said to be one of the best deals around. This building is a piece of history of Woodstock and holds a special place in many of my constituents' hearts. It was a place where many first learned to skate, played their first game of hockey or had the opportunity to watch one of Woodstock's many fine teams take to the ice—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired. Would the member take his seat, please.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today the winners of the

YTV achievement awards. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. The Conservative policy document *New Directions: A Blueprint for Learning in Ontario*, was very clear. It said: "Without basic language and mathematics skills, these young people have no chance of acquiring the more advanced skills and knowledge they will need to compete for jobs, advance academically, or fulfil their personal goals and dreams."

Minister, given these words, how can you possibly justify even considering eliminating 190 hours of instruction in English, 210 hours of instruction in mathematics and at least 190 hours more in science?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I don't think it will surprise the Leader of the Opposition that our party, which released the blueprint on education in 1992, has not changed either the importance that we place on education or the importance we place on the math skills and language skills she refers to. We continue to encourage a curriculum in Ontario that emphasizes those core subjects that prepare young people for the future, and we will continue to do that in the future.

We are now looking at making changes to the secondary school system that have been recommended by not one but two royal commissions, to go to a four-year program of secondary school. The most recent royal commission suggested that the fifth year of high school currently in Ontario does not serve our students, is of no use, so we are going to a four-year program. We're joining the rest of the jurisdictions in Canada, in fact the rest of the jurisdictions in North America. Our commitment is to have a more relevant secondary school program that keeps high exit standards for those who are going to university that also focuses attention on that 60% of our high school students who leave high school and go into the world of work. We think they're important too.

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Mrs McLeod: There is not a single recommendation in the Royal Commission on Learning report that would support cutting 190 hours out of English teaching, 220 hours out of math teaching and another 190 hours out of science. There is not a word in the Royal Commission on Learning report that will support one part of what you are recommending, because you have taken and distorted what the royal commission was wanting to do.

Minister, I take you back to the fact that you are cutting classroom time in basic skills of English, math and science. I remind you of your own words on November 2, when results of reading tests on grade 9 students in Ontario were released. You said then, "I'm concerned by the fact that one third of English students are in the lowest acceptable category and about one half of French-language students are there."

You are planning to lower standards, you are planning to gut classroom instruction in English, math and science, and based on what you said you were concerned about, you surely don't believe that the problem is that students are spending too many hours studying English, math and science. This is all about saving money for your tax cut. You are saving money by taking it directly out of the classroom, which you said you would not do. You are paying for your tax cut by lowering standards in basic skills, the very skills your leader said were essential for future jobs. I ask you again, how can you justify that?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'd like to compliment the Leader of the Opposition once again, as I have most recently, on her imagination, because she's done a good job of imagining what we might be intending to do. Perhaps I can clear it up for her.

We are reforming the secondary school program in Ontario. We are going to a four-year program, as we told the people of Ontario we would and as we promised we would in the Common Sense Revolution. When we do that, we will have a more relevant program, a more challenging program for our students. We will expand—I think the Leader of the Opposition needs to note this—the core curriculum, the amount of time students spend on core subjects; we will have a more demanding curriculum, because we think that's what parents in Ontario want, we're sure that's what taxpayers in Ontario want, that is what will serve the students in Ontario best and that is what we are doing.

Mrs McLeod: There's been a lot said about you in your role as Minister of Education this week, but the worst thing I can say to you today is that you are a Minister of Education who does not know what he is doing to our education system and our students, and furthermore, I'm not sure you care. I know what you're doing and I'm calling you on it, because not only are you cutting instruction in math and English and science, you are denying students who want to go to college and university a classroom education.

You have said that you are planning to give students an academic credit for finding a summer job. Let me be clear. We support co-op education, we support apprenticeship programs, but a student-arranged program, be it a summer job or any other, is a far cry from co-op education or apprenticeship training. There is no standard, no evaluation, no supervision and no guarantee that it relates to any training for any job at all. You are not allowing students to have this as an option. You are denying them classroom education. You are forcing them out of the classroom and into this work experience for 20% to 40% of their time.

You will save money doing that, Minister, because there will be fewer credits in the classroom, fewer teachers and a lot fewer dollars, and that's what this is all about, but your policy will lock thousands of students into low-skilled jobs from which they have no escape. How do you justify setting this kind of trap for young people just to find money to pay for your tax cut?

Hon Mr Snobelen: It's very difficult to explain what we might or might not do in the imagination of the Leader of the Opposition, and so I suppose in the imagination of the Leader of the Opposition we might or might

not do anything. I can tell you what we are doing, Mr Speaker. What we are doing is working with an advisory council made up of the education community. We are going to prepare a draft document of what we might possibly do in a four-year program. It will be based on best experiences of other jurisdictions and the best advice we have from educators. When we have that draft document, we will work with educators, with parents and with students across the province to design the best curriculum for our students, the best curriculum in Canada. That's our intention.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Given his draft document and what it will do to destroy public education in this province, I sincerely hope that before the official draft document comes out they've gone back to the drawing-board, as they had to do on the toolkit that became more of a demolition kit with explosives going off everywhere you look, and it's one of those explosives I want to ask the minister about.

Minister, in answer to a question on Monday you said you'd not made any special deals with school boards to implement your spending cuts. I want to turn to a different kind of special deal today, because we have some information that indicates that you forced the Metropolitan Toronto School Board into a backroom deal, one that allows you to pick the pocket of Metro taxpayers for some \$65 million, money that is supposed to be used for local education. According to our information, here's how you're going to take the \$65 million from Metro ratepayers: You're going to reduce the funding for special-needs students; you're going to stop paying for special access students, the students from separate school boards who use public school facilities; and you're going to basically do a paper shuffle, which means you get more money by stretching the time you take the money over a longer period of time.

Minister, will you confirm the existence of this agreement with the Metro Toronto board? Will you confirm that you forced this deal on Metro school board trustees so that you could take \$65 million from the pockets of local taxpayers in Metro Toronto?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): What I believe the Leader of the Opposition is referring to are the arrangements made by the Ministry of Education and Training with the Metro board as a result of the social contract, and the permanent savings that were entrenched in the social contract, in that fairly articulate description of the mechanisms that were used by the Metro board and the Ministry of Education to have those savings happen relevant to the social contract. As I'm sure the honourable member is aware, the social contract has expired. We are seeking permission in Bill 34 to enter into an agreement with the negative grant boards in Ottawa and Metro Toronto, and when we have passage of Bill 34 we'll discuss this with representatives of those two boards.

I can assure the Speaker and the member opposite that the Metro board and the Ottawa board are sophisticated people who represent the interests of the people who elect

them, and I expect that they will do that in their discussions with us.

Mrs McLeod: I take that as confirmation of the backroom agreement that was reached with the Metro Toronto board of education and it does take me back, Minister, to hearing you repeatedly say in this House that you are confident that the Metro Toronto school board would voluntarily give you \$65 million of local taxpayers' money. Let me say this to you directly: The Metro Toronto school board is not giving you this money voluntarily. They are giving it to you, Minister, because you're forcing them to. They are giving it to you because you put a gun to their head and you threatened them with even a worse deal if they didn't give this to you.

Minister, I understand that one of the options you considered is that if the board didn't go along with this deal, you would have forced the board to cover the cost of teacher pension contributions, which is currently borne by the province. That was just one option, a big gun to the Metro Toronto board's head. Isn't it true that you used this political blackmail to arrive at this secret deal with the Metro Toronto public school board, and isn't it true that if Metro didn't agree to this deal you were prepared to take other steps to grab \$65 million you are not entitled to in order to pay for Mike Harris's income tax cut?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again let me compliment the Leader of the Opposition on her use of imagination. I have never seen such a stunning demonstration of a use of imagination in one single afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition purports to know what I think. I don't know whether she knows perhaps how I feel. I'm not sure, but her imagination is very fruitful.

1400

I don't know where this conjecture comes from, but I have no difficulty in understanding that the Leader of the Opposition probably has some difficulty herself in understanding the concept that there is in Ontario but one taxpayer, the taxpayer who pays residential taxes, the taxpayer who pays income taxes and what we are up to as a government, in concert with school boards, is to create a school system that has higher value for those taxpayers, that has higher student achievement for a lower cost.

That was the objective of this government and I expect that to be the objective of every board of education in the province.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, I have no difficulty at all understanding ministerial blackmail, extortion, bullying, intimidation, call it what you will, even though I have never seen it before, and there is no doubt that's what we are seeing here.

This minister is also seeking to grab \$10 million—

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'll take your point of order up after question period is over.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): You can't pick and choose when you take a point of order.

The Speaker: If it has to do with what's transpiring now, the member for Mississauga South.

Mrs Marland: I'd like to ask you if "extortion" and "blackmail" are parliamentary words in this chamber under your Speaker.

The Speaker: I listened very carefully to the member that was asking the question, and I had some doubts myself of whether it was parliamentary or not. However, if the member asking the question feels that it was unparliamentary, I would ask her to withdraw.

Mrs McLeod: No, Mr Speaker, I do not, and I would happily seek your guidance in choosing any of those words at all to describe what is blackmail, extortion, bullying or intimidation.

I say to this minister, on the same issue, that you are also seeking to grab \$10 million in property taxes from local taxpayers in Ottawa, and in the same way, I believe, you are prepared to place a gun to the head of the Ottawa Board of Education to make sure you get the money.

You will know there was an article about this issue in last Thursday's Ottawa Citizen. It questioned—a question we all have—why the Ottawa board would voluntarily write you a cheque for \$10 million of their taxpayers' money, and a source within the Ministry of Education is quoted as saying, "We think they'll cooperate in the end." Now we know why.

Minister, are you preparing to blackmail the Ottawa board in exactly the same way that you have blackmailed the Toronto board and will you stop blackmailing these boards?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The flights of fantasy, the imagination, the conjecture continues in question period today. This must be the Walt Disney version of question period.

I can only assume that this kind of conjecture and these flights of fantasy, these questions of blackmail must be predicated on the member's past experience. I don't know what else they would be predicated on.

I can assure the member opposite of this, that I believe—I'm not sure that she believes this, but I believe—that the boards of education across the province are committed to the same thing as this government is committed to, and that is delivering a higher value to the taxpayers of Ontario. That's better student achievement for fewer dollars, and that's what we all intend to deliver.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. I want to say that we all know that a deal was worked out with Ms Vanstone, that it's already in place and you're just waiting to announce it.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): My question, though, is related to the quality of education in this province, and I think back to when the now Premier was the leader of the third party and stood in this place and emphasized at every turn the need for core programs in education and criticized any perceived move away from the protection of core programs.

Yesterday we heard from the principals of high schools across the province who came here to Queen's Park to express their concern about what they consider to be the dismantling of education system and the threats to quality

education in Ontario because of the commitments made by this government, apparently, in the paper to cut by about 190 to 200 hours core programs in English, in math and in science courses, not because of the commitment to lower the number of years in high school but because of a commitment to require students to have a mandatory work experience of up to 40% of their course load.

Will the minister now commit that he will not replace quality education programs, core programs in English and math, with the flipping of burgers at Harvey's or McDonald's?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I hope the member opposite's comments on flipping burgers, the somewhat flippant comments, if you will, don't want to treat with any disrespect the people who do that for a living and people who have actually started their careers in the service industry. I hope that's not intended.

I can't inform the honourable member of decisions that this government has not made. I obviously can't inform him of commitments we don't have. I can tell him the commitments that we do have: We have a commitment to expanding the core curriculum in our secondary school program; we have a commitment to having a more demanding curriculum in our secondary school program; we have a commitment to maintaining high standards of student achievement for those students who are university-bound, and we have a commitment to the 60% of students who leave high school and go to work. We think those young people are important to the future of this province.

Mr Wildman: I don't need any lectures from this minister about being flippant in this House. This guy is more flippant than any other member on the government side.

Bill White, principal of Stephen Leacock Collegiate in Scarborough, stated yesterday that the document that was published was "conceived in obsessive secrecy." The minister has said that he intends to get input from educators and boards and parents over the summer. We know that is an inadequate approach to getting public input and input from those with expertise in the field.

Will the minister at least agree to slow down this process and give teachers and parents and students the opportunity, a real opportunity, to have input into these changes, keeping in mind the commitment his leader made to increasing core programs and protecting core programs rather than replacing them with whatever is being proposed in this paper?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the honourable member for the subsequent question, because it gives me a chance, for the third time today, to say publicly and say on the record that our party is committed to expanding the core subjects that are taught in our secondary schools. We think that's an important part of the quality of our education program.

The discussion paper that's being speculated on by members opposite this afternoon has not been released. It is not finished. We have got an advisory committee together of people from the education community, a fairly broad group, to produce a draft document. We intend to take that draft document and work with parents, with teachers, with educators, people in the education com-

munity, to produce—and I'll say this again, because I'm proud to say it—the best secondary school program in Canada, bar none.

Mr Wildman: First this minister created a financial crisis in education and now he's trying to create a curriculum crisis.

I have with me over 2,000 postcards from people in Simcoe county addressed to the Minister of Education and to the Premier. I would send these over. These cards say: "Don't cut back on student opportunities. Cuts to public education hurt students, and parents have a right to protect their future." Is the minister prepared to commit the resources, financial and expert, to ensure that we have the proper mandatory evaluation and monitoring of these work-related programs to ensure that they are part of an excellent education system and that they will meet the needs of students today and in their future? Are there going to be the resources required to ensure the monitoring of the programs chosen and how they operate?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The taxpayers of Ontario currently contribute about \$14 billion to our school system, and that's a lot of resources that we get from them. We intend to create a school system that represents a better value for those taxpayers, for parents and for students. We will do that.

In terms of co-op we have not, as I've said, announced our intentions for a four-year program. When we do, we'll do it in draft form. We'll talk to people who have experienced co-op education. We'll make sure it's a quality program. I have been to a variety of schools over the course of the last six months, I've witnessed young people in co-op education programs and I can tell you what they've told me. They've told me that those are very valuable experiences for them.

Again, 60% of our students in high school do not go to university; they go to the world of work. They want to make a contribution to our province, and I think that co-op is making a significant contribution to those young people. We intend to expand and improve that program.

1410

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Last week the House passed my resolution calling on the government to establish timetables for sunseting persistent toxic chemicals that affect our health. In doing so, they recognize the serious health effects of air and water pollution. It's time for you to take action to protect human health.

Would you agree that when it comes to human health, precautionary principles should prevail, meaning that if there is any doubt about the health effects of a pollutant, we should effect and exercise extreme caution in allowing that pollutant to continue to be emitted?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I agree with my colleague across the way and I think every citizen in the province would agree that with any toxic substance there should always be caution taken.

Ms Churley: Metro council is considering proposals for garbage incinerators. One site that is being considered

by a private proponent in my riding is the old Commissioners site in south Riverdale. Minister, your own ministry has linked dioxin to municipal solid waste incinerators. Many recent studies have shown that there is zero, no safe level for dioxin. It is known to be a very dangerous carcinogenic. Your government is now allowing incinerators after our government said no.

Your talk of reform to the Environmental Assessment Act has many people concerned, and now more concerned than ever. A full EA would require Metro to demonstrate the need and alternatives to the incinerator. I'm sure you would agree that Metro should look at all the alternatives before proceeding with something that would seriously endanger human health.

I'm asking you, Minister, will you commit today to a full environmental assessment where Metro will have to demonstrate the need for the incinerator and provide alternatives?

Hon Mrs Elliott: The environmental protection of air, water and soil for the people in this province is our ministry's foremost consideration. My colleague across the way talks about incineration. Yes, it's true that we have lifted the ban on incineration. We are very proud of the fact that when we did lift that ban to once again allow incineration as an option for dealing with waste problems in Ontario, we put incineration among the strictest controls in the province, unlike the opposition across the way who, while they put that ban on incineration during their term of government, allowed incinerators that were still operating to continue in the province of Ontario and kind of forget that while they talk about how terrible incineration really is.

We have said from the beginning that dealing with waste problems is the responsibility of each individual municipality, and they must determine what is the best option for their individual needs and the citizens of their area.

Ms Churley: Minister, talk about doublespeak. It's time for you to start saying what you really mean here. We are talking about putting a huge garbage incinerator in the heart of downtown Toronto in a residential area and in the heart of the film industry in the city of Toronto. You didn't answer my question.

On October 23, the member for Ottawa South asked the Premier, "Do you still...believe that Ontario's dumps"—and he was speaking to dumps—"ought to be the subject of full and public hearings under the Environmental Assessment Act?" Your Premier answered, "Yes, I do."

You have on several occasions contradicted the Premier and said that indeed you are reviewing the EA process—and don't laugh; I have many clips of it here. Here today you, as the Minister of Environment and Energy, still have not given me an answer. Are you ruling out a full EA or aren't you? I am asking you once again to commit today to my constituents in Riverdale and to the people of Ontario, because dioxins spread far and wide, that you will commit to a full environmental assessment before any incinerator is built anywhere in Ontario.

Hon Mrs Elliott: As I said earlier, we have lifted the ban on incinerations, and in so doing we have put

incinerators back in Ontario with among the strictest standards in the entire world.

When I campaigned to run for this office, I can tell you that I heard from people all across this province who said that the environmental assessment process as it relates to waste is broken. In my own municipality and the municipalities all across this province we've spent millions of dollars and we've spent years of frustrated efforts trying to find landfill sites or solutions to deal with our waste, and they have failed miserably. That tells me the environmental assessment as it deals with waste does not work and is in need of dramatic reform. We are doing that. We have not yet finalized how we're going to do that, but I can tell you that we have enormous support in making those changes that are desperately needed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy also. We know the Ministry of Environment has had a 30% staffing cut, we know the Ministry of Environment has lost \$200 million worth of funding, we know the Ministry of Environment has not presented to this Legislature a core business plan, and yet we are presented with a wholesale weakening of environmental regulations across this province.

I want to ask the minister: Given the fact that the member for Lincoln, that known advocate of weak environmental regulation, is in charge of this process, could she tell me and commit to me that she will not be weakening the various regulations, all 80 of which are under her control, with regard to the environment?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): Like all ministries, my ministry is taking its share and doing its part to help restore this province to fiscal soundness. I think we only have to look at countries such as those in the eastern bloc to determine what happens when an economy falls apart, what terrible things happen to the environment. I am firmly convinced, as is this government, that a healthy balance between a healthy environment and a healthy economy is absolutely essential.

There are 80 regulations in my ministry, some of them much older than I am, that need to be carefully reviewed to avoid duplication with other ministries, to avoid overlap with other regulations, and I am very comfortable in undertaking that review. I think it will be good for the province of Ontario and for the citizens who rely on those regulations in their daily activities.

1420

Mr Michael Brown: She gave us no commitment at all regarding whether these regulations will be maintained. For example, I want to tell the House that she's talking about effluent monitoring and effluent limits; she's talking about gasoline volatility; she's talking about air contaminants; she's talking about deep-well disposal and she's talking about hauled-in liquid industrial waste disposal sites, on all of which her government in previous incarnations did not have a strong record.

What we want to know from the minister is what kind of public consultation process will take place? The one that is being advertised over the EBR registry these days

is totally unacceptable. You have talked to your friends so far, but you have not talked to the broader Ontario public. We want to know what kind of public consultation process will be involved so that we and the public of Ontario can be assured that we have strong environmental regulations in this province.

Hon Mrs Elliott: With regard to regulatory review, all I can say is that it's about time we did some house-keeping in many of these ministries to clean up and make our regulations more effective and useful.

We are receiving submissions from people all across this province today, and I would say that if there is any citizen or any member of this House who has ideas or requests, we are most welcome to receive them at any time.

We believe that probably around the end of May we will have the first stage of our regulatory review finished, and there will be an opportunity for public consultation and comment on that review over the summer.

POLICE SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question was for the Solicitor General, who does not appear to be here again this afternoon, so I will direct my question to the Attorney General, who is the chief law officer of the province.

You and your party, and certainly your leader Mike Harris, used to say that there was only one taxpayer, and we agree. That's still true, but huge cuts to municipalities are hurting the people of Ontario. One of the ways that they're hurting us is in terms of public safety issues, which we heard yesterday are very important to your government.

I wonder if you know that there's a huge battle that's brewing in Wallaceburg, Ontario, between the police services board, the council of the town and the police association about how that particular municipality is going to offset your government's cuts in money transferred to the municipality.

The chair of the police services board and town councillor, Ron Tack, has said, and I'll quote him from a letter that he wrote to the Solicitor General: "Mike Harris has told us to be lean and mean. He has challenged us to make creative cuts, but he hasn't given us the tools to do our job. Now we face roadblocks. Taxpayers are the ones who are suffering."

The other side of this comes from Sheri Oliphant, who's the head of the police association, who says: "This government made a promise that policing would not be cut, but municipalities need to come up with the money." She goes on to state: "There is a high crime rate in Wallaceburg and we can't afford to lose officers."

Because of these cuts the town of Wallaceburg and the police services board together have laid off two probationary cadets and a probationary dispatcher. As a result, they have been taken to the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, which is responsible for maintaining public safety in terms of police services boards' decisions.

My question is that since the Common Sense Revolution states funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed, how is the town of Wallaceburg to imple-

ment these cuts in its policing budget and why did you lead people to believe that you could implement your irresponsible tax cut without—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): It's my understanding that the reductions to municipalities are about 2% of their total spending. It's also my understanding that in reading the article that the member has obviously read that was in the *Globe and Mail* yesterday, the town of Wallaceburg asked the police force to look for imaginative ways that cuts could be made and that they, in essence, refused to do so. This, I believe, is something that they found necessary to do. In fact, I think that the police wanted no part in dealing with looking for any means to reduce expenditures.

I certainly don't want to comment on what is now taking place before a board and deal with any of that, but I do think that the town asked the police service to look and see if they could make cuts and they refused to do so.

Mrs Boyd: This is not a question of what's happening in front of that board. It is just an example of what's happening all over the province with respect to public safety because of your massive cuts to municipalities.

Let's talk about what your promises were with respect to law enforcement. Under the Common Sense Revolution, page 28, "The province should be working directly with police forces in the province to determine their staffing needs, and with municipal governments to establish mutual funding arrangements to meet those needs."

Again in the Common Sense Revolution: "The people of Ontario are rightly concerned about community safety in our province, particularly the increasing incidence of violent crime. That is why funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed."

The government is telling the municipalities that they must cut millions of dollars out of their budgets without raising taxes, and we've heard again and again your Treasurer say things like: "There should not be hundreds of millions of dollars in increases in user fees by municipalities. If there are, then those municipal leaders are quite frankly not doing their jobs and they are not thinking through restructuring."

You promised policing would not be cut. You promised it again and again. You admit in the Common Sense Revolution that funding restrictions have direct effects on the ability of the police to meet the needs of their communities. This isn't about the OCCPS; it's about funding cuts to municipalities that are putting in danger the people of Ontario because public safety is being endangered. I ask you again, what do you have to say to municipalities who are trying to preserve public safety?

Hon Mr Harnick: What I have to say is that the municipal reductions are 2% of total spending and 2% is easily achievable if people work together to look for the best ways to do it. Quite simply, when we have \$100 billion in debt, 2% of reduction in spending is not a lot to ask for.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Forty-eight per cent.

Hon Mr Harnick: I remind the member who made the allegations a moment ago that those allegations are just incorrect. The Metropolitan Toronto Police Force is about to add 300 officers to their force, the most hired in decades. The Ontario Provincial Police has added front-line police officers to its force and they in fact have a greater complement of officers now than they had before. So I say to the member that the premise of her question and the facts she leads with are wrong.

TEACHERS' SICK LEAVE GRATUITIES

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training.

Interjections.

Mr Froese: I'm sure the member for Sudbury wants to hear this question, as indeed do all the members of this House.

Recently I read a story about how the Sudbury boards, both the separate school board and the public school board, have been required to pay some \$2.6 million to retiring teachers in one year for unused sick leave. I'm concerned about this payment and such payments that might affect other school boards across the province and indeed the school boards in the Niagara region.

Minister, is this an extreme example of millions of dollars flowing out of local school boards to fund retirement gratuities for teachers or is this payment common?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for St Catharines-Brock for the question. I think everyone in this chamber should be aware of the fact that taxpayers are very concerned about this subject. I've had a lot of calls from taxpayers throughout the province over the past few days about the stories that have emerged about the \$8.2-billion deficit that taxpayers are responsible for in the teachers' pension fund. A lot of taxpayers were disturbed and very concerned to find out that next year the provincial government will contribute almost \$1 billion to that pension fund.

In addition to that, on the subject the member has brought up, which is sick leave gratuities, the school boards and teachers' unions have negotiated packages throughout the province that have teachers get sick leave gratuities when they retire. In fact, by some estimates—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I know the people across the way here may not be interested in this, but I assure you their constituents are.

This has amounted to a \$1-billion unfunded liability on behalf of the boards. The taxpayers will have to pay for these sick leave gratuities and they are very concerned about it. Over the next five years, almost 20,000 teachers will be retiring and this will mean the taxpayer will be responsible for \$600 million of these sick leave gratuities.

1430

Mr Froese: The figure of \$1 billion owed by local school boards in unused sick days seems almost too much to comprehend. Minister, are the school boards prepared to meet the burden of this debt?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the honourable member. That's what's disturbing for the taxpayers. In fact, the

billion dollars or so is an unfunded liability. As many as half of the school boards in Ontario have made no provision at all for sick leave gratuities, and again, it will represent \$600 million over the next five years.

To help school boards and the teachers' unions arrive at some arrangements that may be more palatable to the taxpayers of the province, we have put a provision in Bill 34 that will end the provincial requirement, the requirement in the Education Act, for 20 days of sick time per year for teachers and will allow school boards to negotiate a package with the teachers' unions that is more representative of the normal packages for sick leave across the province and in the private sector.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. Numerous houses in the Hamilton beach strip in my riding were covered by coal dust in an incident where it blew across the harbour in January 1994, coming from local industry. Almost two years of investigations by your ministry, and there were charges being laid against Stelco and Dofasco as a result of the incident. The process was lengthy, it was complex and to quote your district supervisor, Mr Slater, "It's a long, drawn-out process when going through formal charges."

On Friday these charges were dropped when the crown attorney representing the Ministry of Environment said, "These trials would be lengthy and expensive when considered in relation to the gravity of the alleged offence." Maybe, Minister, it's a coincidence that your reduction package of two weeks ago labelled these complaints as a nuisance and low priority and these charges were dropped. Can you tell the House today why the charges were dropped and what you are going to do to protect the residents of the beach strip in Hamilton and across Ontario from these types of incidents?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): The first thing is that we want to assure the people that if environmental laws are being broken we take this seriously and that polluters will be prosecuted by this government. Prosecutions or charges of such sort are handled by members of the Attorney General's office.

The information given to me indicates that the charges in this case were laid. They relate to coal dust believed to have been blowing in January 1994, causing discolouration of harbour ice and snow, and that there were 11 complaints of dirty cars, windows and porches.

I'm advised that the reasons the Attorney General's prosecutor withdrew the charges were the following: More than two years had passed and the problem seemed largely resolved; both companies had taken a number of positive steps since these charges were laid and there had been no recurrence of these events in almost two years; the scheduled trials of the charges would have been lengthy and expensive without assurance of conviction.

Mr Agostino: Minister, you've told us absolutely nothing new in your response. Basically, talk is cheap and the platitudes you're giving today on the environment are cheap. Ministry of Environment officials tell us these charges were dropped due to a new political direction.

It's clear, Minister, that you have set this political direction. You have set this political direction by a 30% cut; you eliminated 750 positions. The direction has been set by the fact that you have labelled these type of complaints as nuisance and low priority within your own ministry.

The message you're sending out is that environmental protection in residential neighbourhoods is not important, that enforcement is not important. You're going to stand on the sidelines and watch 20 years of progress go down the drain as a result of your gutting of your ministry. Your decision to drop these charges were a result of the message you have sent out and your ministry has sent out that this is not a priority.

Minister, will you stand up today and take full political responsibility for these charges being dropped and give us the specific details of how you are going to continue to enforce environmental standards in Ontario with this 30% reduction in staffing?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I indicate once again that we believe environmental laws must be strongly enforced in this province, but there are many ways of achieving the same environmental standards, and not necessarily through prosecution. These decisions of whether or not to prosecute are made not by my ministry but by lawyers from the Attorney General's office who rely on their best advice and their best knowledge on whether or not to proceed.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. You know that a few weeks ago in this House, your government made announcements in regard to the business plans of all the various ministries within the government of Ontario. Specifically within your own ministry, you announced that through these business plans, "The ministry will continue to phase out economic and social funding (capital and operational) over the next two years," for all economic and social funding programs.

Does this mean the elimination of programs such as the unincorporated community capital assistance program, that it will be gone, a program that pays for infrastructure in small northern communities? Does this mean that the small communities improvement program, the supplementary northern assistance program and the medical and dental assistance program that goes to fund both capital and operational requirements of medical and dental clinics in remote northern communities will be gone? Minister, can you verify that these are the effects of your decisions as they relate to your business plans?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): As the member opposite knows full well, we're trying to re-establish the northern development ministry on priorities instead of being a cheque-writing service or a top-up ministry.

We've consolidated the infrastructure to say that roads are important. The reduction in the road budget will be \$5 million this year and in the following year another \$5 million, and that bodes well when you look at our priority of infrastructure. We also recognize other remote

communities' access. If you look at that, we've maintained the funding for that. The heritage fund is said to be a priority and we've maintained the funding for that on the capital.

On the operating side, we've left intact the front-line services, and I think the member would realize that's after talking to northerners when they said that they wanted to have front-line services intact. The member knows full well that last week's announcement meant that all the northern development offices are left in these small communities, as well as the mining and recorder offices.

Mr Bisson: I find it somewhat interesting, because in speaking to your own staff within your ministry in northern Ontario, they confirmed that in fact this is what's going to happen, that you're pulling the funding away from all those programs that are necessary and crucial for your ministry to support northern communities and northern residents.

I want to draw your attention, Minister, to a document that was put out by the then leader of the third party, Mike Harris, back in January 1995, *A Voice for the North*. It's interesting, because when you read in regard to northern Ontario, it says that in the Tory document *A Voice for the North*, released in 1995, it says you will re-establish the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines as the senior ministry for northern Ontario. Minister, it already was before you got here. You're the guy who's dismantling it. You're taking away all the programs for northerners and for northern communities.

How does cutting funding for these key programs make your ministry the lead ministry when you won't have any programs to deliver to northerners in northern communities?

Hon Mr Hodgson: What we found when we did the consultation prior to the last election on the tour around northern Ontario was that they wanted a change in the direction. They didn't want the northern development ministry just to be a cheque-writing service or a top-up from other line ministries; they wanted real input.

Delivering programs is based on northern priorities, and that is consolidating the capital. Instead of just saying, "Because of this line budget, we can get this leftover program and this one," we wanted to go to the priorities that exist in each community. When we talked to people they said they wanted the front-line services and access to the government, and that's what we prioritized on, the northern development offices. All of them are intact. A couple of weeks ago the rumours were that we were closing all the front-line offices. That's what you were on to a couple of weeks ago.

I think you'll find that this business plan refocuses our ministry so we have input on policies before they become in effect, and that's what a lead ministry is, to take the concerns of northerners so that they have the front-end impact on policies that are made in Toronto.

1440

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and

Recreation. Last week, the honourable minister announced our government's new initiative for vulnerable adults. This new initiative was designed to replace the former government's Advocacy Commission.

A number of my constituents in Scarborough Centre have contacted me with questions as to how effective this new initiative will be. I would ask the minister to explain to this House how our \$3-million initiative will result in more services that are as effective or more effective than the \$18-million system provided by the Advocacy Commission.

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I thank the honourable member for Scarborough Centre. First of all, I believe that all three political parties in this House agree we have a duty to respect the autonomy and dignity of our society's most vulnerable members. This was totally apparent during the committee hearing deliberations on Bill 19. But if we differ, it is in our approach to how we provide assistance to the most vulnerable.

The Advocacy Commission, which was created by the previous government, was a very bureaucratic, intrusive and costly response to addressing the needs of vulnerable adults. The key to our initiative is really how we're going to spend the money. Most of this \$3 million will go directly to community-based services, which means no new bureaucracy and no new legislation. It is a matter of doing better with less.

Mr Newman: I would ask the minister if she would please explain to this House how the \$3 million will be allocated.

Hon Ms Mushinski: Almost all of the \$3 million will be spent in the community. There is no new bureaucracy to support this \$3 million. About \$2.25 million, which is almost double that of the 1995-96 community action fund allocation, will be used to support community organizations for projects that support the coordination of community-based advocacy services, the development of training modules for professional bodies, the training of volunteers and promotion of the use of volunteers and the development of information and other resources helpful to vulnerable adults and their families.

The remaining funds will be used to support an information and referral service and a clearinghouse for information and training resources and to support the strategies to deal with abuse and neglect.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. It has to do with the impact of the tax cut on the revenues of the province. We know you'll be proceeding with the tax cut in a couple of weeks; we know that the Premier said the costs will be roughly \$4.5 billion. The thing we find surprising is that the government has said that the tax cut will fund itself. In other words, you'll cut the taxes, but that will generate so much extra economic activity that you will actually get back the same amount of revenue in taxes as you would have got without the tax cut. For many people in the province, that came as a bit of a surprise.

Because this is absolutely fundamental to the government's economic plan, will the Minister of Finance

table in the House the study that led the government to conclude that the tax cut will fund itself?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Is there a back of an envelope there, Ernie?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Sorry, I couldn't help but find some bemusement about the member for St Catharines's interjection. However, as I'm sure the honourable member opposite will be aware and already anticipates, there is no study reflecting the statement that he's just made. However, obviously the approach taken by the two previous governments of increasing rates of taxation—they increased, for example, combined over the last 10 years, personal income tax in the province 11 times. Despite the fact that the last government increased the rate of taxation, it received less revenue, so we know that approach certainly doesn't work.

Mr Phillips: Let me be very blunt. The Premier has said publicly many times that the tax cut will fund itself. I think the Premier just simply made that up. This is snake oil economics. You have no evidence to support that, but he is saying that publicly. This is absolutely fundamental to your plan: It will fund itself. The Premier has said it. The money markets believe you have some evidence of that.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): We do.

Mr Phillips: The member says, "We do." All I am saying, Minister, is this: Because so much of the future of this province depends on the credibility of the Premier on financial matters, and because he has said publicly that the tax cut will fund itself, this is extremely important. I say once again to the minister, you owe it to the House, you owe it to the people of Ontario, to table the evidence that led the Premier to conclude that the tax cut will fund itself. Will you table whatever information you've got that led the Premier to reach that important public conclusion?

Hon Mr Eves: I believe that over time indeed the tax cut will fund itself, and then some. Talking about a snake oil statement, I presume the member opposite has some respect for the following people who appeared before the finance committee and testified that in fact the tax cut will create jobs and more revenue for the province of Ontario: the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Patti Croft, chief economist, Canada Trust; Bill Robson, senior policy analysis, C.D. Howe Institute; the Ontario Natural Gas Association; Wallace Kenny, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; Don McIver, chief economist, Sun Life Assurance Co; Peter Woolford, senior vice-president, Retail Council of Canada; the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association; Judith Andrew, director of provincial policy, Canadian Federation of Independent Business—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The question has been answered.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines regarding bus deregulation. As minister,

you are responsible for the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, and as such you will know that the ONTC's bus service in the north represents the only line-haul carrier north of Bracebridge on the Highway 11 corridor and the only line-haul carrier operating north of Sudbury on the Highway 69-144 corridor.

In its 1996 business plan, the ONTC said this about bus deregulation, and I quote: "The anticipated deregulation of the bus industry in 1998 is a serious threat to bus operations, which has been a marginal commercial business for the ONTC."

Minister, your legislation will directly impact northern communities like Kapuskasing, Timmins, Hearst and Cochrane. I want to know what you are going to do to protect northern transportation for people who are living in our communities.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): The Northland corporation, through the ONTC, has a board of directors, and their staff are looking into this and drawing up an analysis on the impact.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You are the minister.

Hon Mr Hodgson: That's why we have a board, I say to the member from Cochrane. When their information is available, I'll make it available to you as well.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The time for oral question period has expired.

1450

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I refer to standing order 32(a), which reads, "A minister of the crown may make a short factual statement relating to government policy, ministry action or other similar matter of which the House should be informed."

Earlier today—

The Speaker: Order. There's nothing out of order.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On another point of order, Mr Speaker: I asked the Minister of Finance if he could name one economist or one person who says the tax cut will fund itself, and you cut him off before—

The Speaker: Order.

PETITIONS

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health will begin to charge seniors and social assistance recipients a \$2 user fee for each prescription filled on June 1, 1996; and

"Whereas health care experts have asserted that user fees for drugs could jeopardize the health of individuals who cannot afford to pay for their medication; and

"Whereas Ontario's ex-psychiatric populace rely heavily on prescription drugs to remain stable, and mental health care providers and the general public are scared of the outcome if these patients cannot afford to buy their medication because of the \$2 dispensing fee when it is

normal policy to only prescribe them a two- to three-day supply of medication to prevent potential misuse or an overdose; and

"Whereas the perceived savings to health care from the \$2 copayment fee will not compensate for the suffering and misery caused by this user fee and will not even cover the costs of extra emergency services nor repeated hospital services. The \$2 copayment will consequently not lead to cost savings but rather increases in the case of expensive health care services; and

"Whereas the current Ontario Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, promised as an opposition MPP in a July 5, 1993, letter to Ontario pharmacists that his party would not endorse legislation that will punish patients to the detriment of health care in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the government to repeal this user fee plan before it takes effect on June 1, 1996, because of the potential dramatic increase in emergency and police services, and the suffering and misery of human lives—especially psychiatric outpatients and those who depend on medication for their daily survival."

I've affixed my signature to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here yet another petition from people opposed to rent control. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system"—

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Name names.

Mr Bisson: Derwyn Shea.

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants in Ontario;

"Whereas, although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if the rent controls are abolished;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I've signed that petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition forwarded to the member for Eglinton, which I'm presenting today. It is in regard to tax cuts, and it's signed by approximately 40 citizens of the riding of Eglinton.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): "Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government 'will not cut health care'; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign, the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force related to any hospital closures in Hamilton-Wentworth, and in particular St Joseph's Hospital, 50 Charlton Avenue East, Hamilton."

I affix my signature to the petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have yet another group of petitions, this time from the people of Toronto, from Moss Park, which read:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need of all humans, and whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons, and as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent control remains in effect in this province."

FAMILY SUPPORT PAYMENTS

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition signed by some 98 people from my riding with regard to fathers who do not pay support for their children. It appears to be in the proper form.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I am pleased to present a petition which reads in part:

"Whereas the public secondary school teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch Hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it says:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This is signed by a number of individuals who live in Eganville and Pembroke, Ontario, and I have affixed my signature as well, as I agree with this petition.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Windsor and Essex county, Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the following:

"Whereas children are our most important resource and are Ontario's future; and

"Whereas the Ontario Child Health Study, 1988, indicated that at any given time, 18% of children and adolescents require mental health services; and

"Whereas recent research studies have proven the positive results and cost-effectiveness of mental health treatment for children and adolescents; and

"Whereas the 95 children's mental health centres in Ontario serve over 85,000 children and their families

each year by providing quality programs to address urgent and serious problems; and

"Whereas the cost of providing treatment to children in 95 mental health centres across the province is less than the cost of running one large urban teaching hospital or school board; and

1500

"Whereas mental health service for children and adolescents is not a guaranteed service, unlike that provided for adults; and

"Whereas there are significantly fewer options for treatment and support to families available in communities as a result of past and pending budget reductions;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly to continue to invest significant resources in children's mental health programs. Our future depends on it. Give children's mental health centres a mandate to continue their work with children and families through appropriate legislation."

I join with the thousands of other fellow citizens in my home town in signing this petition.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition from residents of Ontario to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirits sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits over to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in agreement with its contents.

FAMILY SUPPORT OFFICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have a very short but important petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we believe that the family support plan is a viable and necessary service provided by the government of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the proposed centralization of the family support plan will have a negative impact on the children who are supported under this plan and should be cancelled."

I affix my signature to the petition as I believe in it.

ALZHEIMER RESPITE CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Niagara region has one of the highest per capita populations of seniors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Niagara region ranks 32nd out of 38 health regions in long-term-care funding and that more individuals wait for support services from the March of Dimes than those who actually are served by it; and

"Whereas Alzheimer patients who critically depend on support services in order to cope in a more humane way with this devastating illness continue to suffer from unacceptable delays in receiving respite care; and

"Whereas more than half of all Ontario families waiting for Alzheimer-related respite care reside in the Niagara area;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to adopt the plan by the Niagara Regional District Health Council which would help improve the way vulnerable people are treated in the Niagara area."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in agreement with its contents.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Martin, on behalf of Mr Laughren, from the standing committee on government agencies presented the committee's seventh report.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Pursuant to standing order 106(g)11, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HIGHWAY TRANSPORT BOARD AND PUBLIC VEHICLES AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION

DES TRANSPORTS ROUTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET LA LOI SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Mr Palladini moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act and the Public Vehicles Act and to make consequential changes to certain other Acts / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission des transports routiers de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun et apportant des modifications corrélatives à certaines autres lois.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): The purpose of this bill is to prepare Ontario for a more competitive intercity bus industry. This government is committed to breaking down barriers to economic growth and investment, and we are committed to tackling the red

tape that restricts private sector ingenuity. That's why we are introducing Bill 39 to allow an orderly transition to economic deregulation and to remove barriers that restrict the intercity bus industry. Ontario can look forward to this transition in January 1998.

Ontario's scheduled, charter and school buses, as well as parcel express services, have been regulated for more than 70 years. The intercity bus industry is the last transportation mode in Canada where market entry is restricted. Canada and Ontario have grown and flourished in those years. The intercity bus industry has to be able to compete, to make taking the bus an attractive travel option. At one time it made sense to regulate the intercity bus industry, but the time has come to let the industry decide how best to meet the diverse needs of the communities it serves. In fact, the 1992 Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation recommended relaxing the regulations on the bus industry.

Deregulation will create healthy competition. I'll give you an example. Today, a bus company with exclusive charter rights in a particular community can charge its customers higher prices because there is no competition. After deregulation, several companies can compete for customers by offering lower prices and more services to meet the demand.

Another benefit of deregulation is improved industry flexibility. If a travel company needs to charter buses for tours, it will be able to hire one bus company for all of its tour routes. Right now, such a company operating in four or five communities might have to deal with as many bus companies.

Deregulation will also improve customer service and promote more and better service options. For instance, one entrepreneur has indicated she would like to offer an exclusive, high-quality service for business travellers. She wants to create a service where customers can relax in a comfortable and spacious van, watch videos, read the newspaper and enjoy a coffee and a snack. I think this is a great idea, and I bet travellers will think so too.

These are just a few examples, but there are many more benefits of removing economic regulations on intercity buses. It will open up opportunities for entrepreneurs to seek out markets and offer convenient new services to Ontarians.

Of course, we don't expect the industry to wake up tomorrow and be fully prepared to compete. Some 70 years of restrictions have influenced the market. With that in mind, we consulted with the industry and came up with a solution that reflects their recommendations. We are setting up an interim regulatory system during the 21 months leading up to full deregulation. The intercity bus industry has agreed to pay the costs of the interim system. It includes a new Ontario Highway Transport Board with a more streamlined procedure, cheaper operating costs and a full cost-recovery strategy.

This interim system will give the industry stability and bus operators time to prepare for a more competitive environment, plus it will give us a chance to work with the federal government and other jurisdictions to encourage deregulation of the bus industry in other provinces. In this way we can ensure Ontario bus companies have fair access to other markets within Canada.

Finally, I'd like to point out that during this interim period we will also set out a process to promote the creation of viable services that respond to the needs of small towns and remote areas. Our goal here is to encourage local entrepreneurs or smaller operators to take over services from existing bus operators who are thinking of downsizing.

I'd like to take this opportunity to reassure the public, and especially people living in small communities across Ontario, that this government is looking out for you. We are committed to working with the bus industry and local community groups to help you keep your local bus service and potentially see that service improve.

1510

A regulated system cannot guarantee service to small-town Ontario and we know that the current system is not. In fact, in the past 15 years, more than 400 communities across Ontario lost their bus service. By removing restrictions on the industry, we can only improve the chances for these communities to get the services they need. When the demand is there, market forces will encourage the private sector to create more local bus services.

In fact, I think people who live in small towns across Ontario will find that their local bus service is an important link in the chain of intercity travel. After all, passengers from smaller towns often transfer to larger buses to get to a central location. Without these so-called feeder services, the larger bus companies would probably not have enough passengers.

However, if some bus companies choose to withdraw their services from communities during the next two years, this government will require they give us and the community fair warning. Bus companies planning to abandon a scheduled service will have to give 90 days' notice, instead of the current 10 days, and those planning to cut bus service by more than one quarter must give 30 days' notice. That's three times as long as required now. Plus, we will require bus companies to continue to provide service until a replacement is found or until the notice period expires, whichever comes first. During that time and in cases of serious hardship, the company must work with the local community and other interested groups in a reasonable effort to find a replacement.

In fact, some local entrepreneurs have already expressed interest in replacing abandoned services or implementing new services to compete with existing bus companies across the province, including northern and southwestern Ontario. These people came forward in response to the negative—in my view, unfounded—criticism expressed by those who oppose deregulation.

I'd now like to talk on the other important issue, that is, the issue of public safety. At the Ministry of Transportation, the safety of the travelling public is our top priority. I assure the people of Ontario and members of this House that we will take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the intercity bus industry.

The increased competition that comes with freer access to the marketplace will not compromise public safety. Deregulation of the bus industry will only affect the economic aspects, such as market entry. This government's existing and planned safety measures, including those announced in my ministry's road safety plan, will uphold the intercity bus industry's excellent safety record.

First of all, the road safety plan includes a safety rating system that will help us measure the safety performances of both truck and bus operators. A truck or bus company safety rating will be available to the public or anyone interested in doing business with them. This puts pressure on the industry to make safety a priority.

Secondly, the road safety plan also calls for increased fines for truck and bus operators who don't meet the standards for safety. Plus, imposing a system like demerit points on truck and bus drivers for industry-related safety offences may also be an option.

Before being allowed on the highway, new bus operators will need to demonstrate that they understand all the safety requirements by completing a written exam. Plus, new bus companies can expect our enforcement officers to audit their place of business within six months of starting up their service. Of course, we will also conduct regular on-road safety blitzes on intercity buses just as with trucks, to sniff out the bad operators and to get them off the road.

We are taking steps to ensure that when deregulation does take effect, we don't have new bus companies arriving on the scene with a view to make some quick cash without the appropriate attention to public safety. That's why we are increasing the insurance requirements for bus operators. This way, we deter fly-by-nighters and encourage only those bus operators that are serious about providing a safe service for the public.

Finally, this government is advocating a national review of bus safety to consider whether special bus safety measures should be in place right across Canada.

Bill 39 responds to the red-tape review that this government promised in the November 1995 economic statement. The Ministry of Transportation has been working with the Red-Tape Review Commission to remove unnecessary or unfair barriers to business growth and job creation.

Deregulating Ontario's intercity bus industry will do just that, and more. I am confident that deregulating Ontario's intercity bus industry will ensure appropriate levels of service based on market demand and the needs of the travelling public. I am confident it will encourage innovation on the part of the existing industry and the many potential newcomers, and I am confident it will ensure a safe, efficient and healthy bus industry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could have unanimous consent to divide the time, or the first 90 minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: With whom?

Mr Colle: Just to divide the time.

The Deputy Speaker: With whom?

Mr Colle: On our side, we want to divide the 90 minutes. Just two of us want to speak.

Interjection: Mr Conway and Mr Colle.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that the time be split between Mr Colle and Mr Conway? It is agreed.

Mr Colle: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think the minister has found out, like certainly I've found out, that this is a very complex issue. It's not as easy as it looks at first blush. There are many different views on deregulation and the busing industry. If you talk to people who are in

the industry, they have different views. I think there is no real true consensus of what the ultimate solution is, so it is not something that I think anybody can say they have the definitive answer on. In other words, how do we provide cost-effective, regular bus transportation across this province and at the same time allow the providers to work in a competitive environment and serve the consumers, the bus customers who are in every community across Ontario?

Again, it is a real challenge to do that, and I think the providers over the last 100 years have known how difficult it is to meet the challenge of Ontario's geography, the distances. Certainly distances sometimes between communities do not make for a profitable enterprise. It's certainly easy to provide bus service perhaps within the Golden Horseshoe, the GTA or near Windsor, but then when you have to service northern Ontario and parts of middle Ontario it becomes quite a challenge to offer regular service.

I think this bill is an attempt to deal with that. The bill is a bit schizophrenic, because originally the ministry and the government announced that they were going to deregulate the bus industry and they were going to do it almost overnight. But I think what happened was that as soon as they made that announcement, they realized it wasn't as easy as that, that instant deregulation caused a lot of problems.

The first one they didn't anticipate was that you couldn't do it unilaterally, because as soon as you deregulate the bus industry in Ontario, it then allows for the bus companies, especially from Quebec, to come into Ontario and operate within Ontario, thereby in essence poaching on businesses here in this province. If you were to deregulate instantly, you would have a problem competing with Quebecers who could come in and set up shop anywhere in Ontario, whereas Ontario companies would have a difficult time doing that in Quebec. Therefore, the government had to take a step back and realize that you just couldn't carte blanche deregulate. In fact, if you notice when this was first announced by ministry officials, they have a very different interpretation of what was to come with deregulation from what we have before us in this bill.

1520

I guess this was never announced in the House, but this is by Frank D'Onofrio, associate director, Ministry of Transportation. He spoke to the Ontario Motor Coach Association, September 21, and he said: "You're probably wondering what the future will hold. I would like to share with you some of the elements to be found in the future to deregulate the system." First of all, he said, "Safety and proof of insurance would be the only criteria you would need." Nothing else would be required but proof of insurance and safety; then you can get a licence.

He also said: "The provision of bus service will be driven by market forces. If there's no demand there is no service." It was from a purely, as I say, market-driven approach, that there be no interference from government, that you were going to go out there and the market would decide what bus service would be available.

He also said at the time of this announcement to the motor coach industry, "There would be no requirement to prove public necessity and convenience." In other words,

the public didn't count. Just as long as you went out there and provided a service, you didn't have to prove it would certainly meet the needs of the public and be convenient to the public.

He also said, "There would be no provincial involvement in resolving unfair competition." This is one of the top bureaucrats in the Ministry of Transportation. He said that the province shouldn't be involved in disputes or in unfair competition. He said the federal Competition Act should get involved.

But as you can see, the government has changed its attitude, because what it's done basically is said, "We were going to deregulate back in September last year," but now they are going to regulate. They still have a regulatory board in place. They've kept the board; fewer members; they're still going to regulate. So these grandiose plans to let market forces decide the bus industry and bus service have basically been thrown out the window.

This statement also said: "Given the current fiscal situation in this province, there will be no provincial government subsidies to ensure the continuation of unprofitable scheduled services" in rural and remote areas. "Again," he said, "no demand, no service." Simple market forces.

The most interesting thing he said was that there was a question on what to do with this. Do you go cold turkey into deregulation or do you phase it in? Speaking to that point this upper-level bureaucrat said: "There are varying points of view as to whether deregulation should be phased in or whether a 'cold turkey' approach should be taken, that is, the bus industry is regulated one day and deregulated the next—the lessons we learned from truck deregulation do not support a transitional approach."

Back in September, the upper level of the bureaucracy was saying that they were going to go cold turkey, that there'd be an announcement and you go right into pure deregulation. It was very plain here. They said that when they went into a transitional phase with trucks, it didn't work. What they've done is they don't want to go cold turkey; they want to go half-baked. So this is one step towards deregulation, one small step, and three steps back. That's what this bill is all about.

To put this in context, what we're talking about in this bill—Madam Speaker, you would know how important public transportation is to ordinary people—is we're talking about providing simple bus service to small communities like Actinolite, Barry's Bay, Carleton Place, Cayuga, Eganville, up in the valley, Killaloe Station, Kaladar, up on the way to Ottawa, even the town of Oakwood on Highway 7 near Lindsay, Strathroy, Sutton, Wasaga Beach, Geraldton up north, Hanover, Havelock.

All these small communities are wondering what is the future of public transportation. Because a lot of people cannot afford automobiles. In some families you may be able to afford one automobile, but certainly not the second or third one, therefore, there is a reliance on public transportation. I know that's hard to imagine for people who live in an affluent community who have the good fortune to have three or four cars in their family, but in many small towns in Ontario there isn't the luxury of having three or four automobiles. In fact, in many communities I'm sure there are people who can't afford

that first one, so the bus is their link to appointments with doctors, with other professionals, for family visits, for getting to work or whatever it may be. That bus is their link to employment and their link to good health, therefore whatever happens to buses and their service availability is critically important to these people who may not live in communities where regular bus service makes a profit.

These are the people we've got to think about who live in smaller towns and cities across this province. They're the ones who should be consulted along with the people in the industry. There should be a formal process of consultation not only to talk about deregulation; as the minister legitimately has said, he does want to try to provide better service, and there may be ways of doing that, but you have to have a meaningful role for representatives of people in small communities to see how they can provide this better service.

In terms of experience with deregulation, the minister often mentions the fact that 400 bus routes have been lost over the last number of years with regulation in place, as if that proves that regulation doesn't work. The American experience is quite interesting. When Ronald Reagan, the guru of common sense, of snake-oil economics, deregulated the busing industry in the United States in 1982, over 50% of the bus routes were lost.

In Canada you say we've lost bus routes because of regulation; in the United States they still lost bus routes with deregulation. Deregulation or regulation is not a panacea either way for producing more bus routes and good service. There's no direct correlation. In some cases there may be, but there are other factors which will dictate whether or not bus routes are profitable. There are demographic changes; there are changes in the economy of communities where factories close, factories open; there are also changes in terms of lifestyles. If you look at the North American experience over the last 10 years, there obviously has been a massive movement towards the private automobile. A lot of people have used more private automobiles, therefore there are fewer customers for the bus systems across Ontario. Just to perhaps emphasize that fact, the American experience has shown that deregulation has cut back on the bus systems across the United States.

In the UK Maggie Thatcher, another guru of trickle-down economics, deregulated what cows eat, so cows began to eat sheep leftovers, and we have the roots of mad cow disease. She also deregulated the bus industry and what happened there is very interesting. In essence, the bottom line in the UK was about a 25% reduction in the number of people using the bus systems. Sure, profitable routes remained intact, but overall the number of available buses and service diminished. You can't say that deregulation will increase passengers on your buses, nor will it necessarily increase the number of routes. There are other variables, as I said: the economy of areas, lifestyle changes. We also have a population that perhaps is reliant on other alternatives besides the buses that were there once before.

1530

In terms of the legislation itself, it's very interesting that this legislation has quite an arbitrary tone. With the old Ontario Highway Transport Board, you could appeal

a decision of the board; you could appeal that through Divisional Court and you could also appeal it to the cabinet. Bill 39 takes the right of appeal away, so if you don't agree—by the way, I think it ends up being a one-person board you'd go to. Therefore, the decisions of the board are final; appeals to Divisional Court and even petitions to the cabinet are no longer available.

I don't know why they wouldn't allow people—and I'm not just talking about small bus carriers or a person who owns a limited line; it could be one of the major carriers—to appeal a decision of this board. This new board, as I said, may end up being the decision of one person. I don't think anybody should have the right to dictate to an industry without the right to appeal.

The taking out of the right of appeal is not a good provision in this bill. If it were left in, it would be a lot fairer in terms of the treatment of people who have to go before this hearing. Remember, this was the board that was supposed to have been abolished. The board still lives, but it has more arbitrary powers, which is certainly contrary to the original cold-turkey approach which was announced but pulled back from.

In terms of the bill itself, we have to look at a number of other factors. I've had a deputation from members—I think you were at the same meeting when members of the disabled community were very concerned about accessible transportation and the fact that Wheel-Trans cuts had taken place in Metro and they weren't getting the service so they could go to their doctors and their jobs.

I don't see any provision in the bill that addresses the issue of accessibility on to buses for people who are not, as we call it, physically able, in other words, the physically challenged. If you live, let's say, in Actinolite and you don't own a car and you're physically disabled and you have to get to Ottawa or to Perth for an appointment, how does that person who is physically disabled, unable to board a conventional bus, get on a bus? It may seem a very minute issue, but for that person who lives in Actinolite and doesn't own a car and can't access a bus, is there any provision for that person to appeal to some board or government agency to allow them to get accessible transportation to a doctor or a meeting perhaps in Perth or a nearby community?

This bill does not include any reference to accessibility for disabled Ontarians, who have a right to accessible transit, whether it be on city transit or on intercity buses. That's another concern that is not addressed in Bill 39.

The bill before us has made an attempt to rectify an ideological, you might say, challenge for this government. Early on in the mandate of this government, I think all ministers were told, "Go out there and find any regulatory board and get rid of them." In so doing, the Ontario Highway Transport Board was sacrificed on the altar of the Common Sense Revolution.

As a result, it was interesting to note that a number of privately run, for-profit providers in the industry—the industry is basically a private sector industry that gets regulated—are upset, strangely enough, by total deregulation. Some of the major providers in the province said, "Total deregulation is nonsense." They do not agree that you should go cold turkey. Therefore we have this half-baked approach, because the private sector knows best.

They've said total deregulation may not be the best way to go.

On the other hand, you've got some other suppliers in the private sector who have said, "This government has backtracked." On the promise made by upper-level bureaucrats and the promises made in the Common Sense Revolution about total deregulation, they went out and bought buses because they thought they were going to go into this deregulation cold turkey; they were ready to go. Then, come April, this government said: "By the way, we've changed our minds. We're not going to deregulate. We're going to almost deregulate." So there are also people in the private sector who say: "Hey, you told us one thing a few months ago. We went out there and spent money to buy buses to get into the business, and now you tell us, 'Don't get into the business because we've changed our minds'."

This bill is causing a lot of consternation, not only in Actinolite and Barry's Bay, in the town of Oakwood, in Manilla and Madoc; it's causing all kinds of consternation right here in the big city and the GTA where a lot of the big bus providers are. They don't really understand or know what the government's intentions are. Is this half-baked bill just going to be in place for January 1? Then will there be maybe another interim phase? Or when will they go cold turkey, as they promised the industry?

We have to have some clear policies in terms of transportation. I think the only way you can do that is by having a formal, comprehensive, face-to-face meeting with the people across Ontario, whether they be in Bracebridge, in Fergus. The providers should also be there, the Ontario Motor Coach Association, the small companies, the tour providers and the big companies, along with the drivers, along with the interested advocates of public transportation.

Sit down and work out a comprehensive approach. This has been done piecemeal. All kinds of indications have been given and backtracking on indications, to the point that there's mass confusion in terms of the direction of this government. Those who thought they were going to deregulate are now upset; the ones who were against deregulation are upset; the people in small towns are wondering; the bus drivers are wondering in terms of their future.

This bill has done a great deal to cause consternation across the province. It has done very little to solve the basic issue of affordable transportation on a regular basis to small communities across this province. That's the ultimate litmus test for any legislation that deals with transportation. The bill cannot be used as an ideological tool, which it was initially.

The first objective should be to improve public transportation and to look comprehensively. I've asked the ministry, "Do you have an impact study that demonstrates what the effects will be of the deregulation, or the half-baked deregulation, in this bill?" They do not have one. Before you change an industry, you should at least have an independent analysis of the impact. That's good, sound business practice. The ministry has not done that. If I were in the private sector or if I were a person depending on that bus in Actinolite, I'd be asking why you wouldn't sit down, have a third party come in here and evaluate the best way we can provide bus service efficiently and

economically, taking into account the economic realities of and the needs of the bus-travelling public.

1540

There is no study, certainly none that's been released. Maybe there is one, but as I said, I've asked for one. There is no analysis of the impact, and we shouldn't underestimate what this means. There are thousands of people who work in this industry, who manufacture buses, who clean them, who drive them, and then certainly the taxpayers who use the buses to get to their doctors' appointments, to work and to see their Aunt Lily. They need the buses. This province needs a good bus industry.

This bill, as I've said, is going about it in a way that is not going to contribute to improving the industry, nor will it improve accessible public transportation for all of our good citizens who will rely on regular bus service, and in Essex too, down in the banana belt of Ontario. Every corner of Ontario wants accessible, affordable transportation.

I think you can do it, and that's why I say we should look at the American example and their failures. Look at what's happened in BC, and then bring it into the Ontario context to see what the real impact of it is, because there are many variables in terms of deregulation. What it means to people and whether it's good, bad or indifferent has to be looked at analytically and not just on a dogmatic basis. That is where the government got into trouble on this bill. It approached it not on the basis of good transportation; it approached it in terms of offering up some regulatory board it thought it could get away with without anybody noticing. But the people of Ontario noticed and, as I said, it's interesting enough, I think the ones that noticed most were the private sector corporations that provide busing across Ontario.

This is why, whenever this government talks about deregulation, I think all of us in this province have to look at these initiatives objectively, because there's nothing that says privatization and deregulation is always good, as this government thinks. There are pitfalls to unilateral deregulation or unilateral privatization. This is a perfect example of it. That's why you cannot accept it as being a panacea, as this government has. That's why they've had to retreat on this. They've had to retreat on this big time because they realized that the people in the business and the citizens pointed out the flaws in it. There are major flaws because of their approach.

I would say to you in closing that perhaps what we can learn from this ill-fated Bill 39 is that you just cannot approach the removal of a service, or the role the government plays in providing a service, without doing an impact analysis of it. You don't have to hire the big, fancy Bay Street consultants, you can do it by going out there and talking to people who are veterans in the industry and sit down and figure out the best way of handling a problem. If you think every regulatory board and every regulation can be tossed out without an impact, I think this government is going to cause itself a lot of grief, as it has in the attempted introduction of this half-baked Bill 39.

I'd say to the members opposite, take a good look at this bill, reminding you that this is a retreat of what the initial intention was. You wonder where they will retreat to next when they get more information about what are

the implications of this bill, as I've said, which does very little in terms of solving the affordable transportation problem and helping this industry in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): As was indicated—and I thank the House for unanimous consent to allow my colleague from Oakwood and I to share the official opposition's 90-minute opening time on this Bill 39—I want to join my colleague from Toronto Oakwood in making some remarks about this very important piece of legislation.

I don't see the minister here, though I did hear most of his remarks in opening the debate this afternoon, the second reading debate on Bill 39, which is essentially an act to deregulate the motor coach industry in Ontario. I want to say at the outset that I will be strongly opposing this bill and I will do so primarily as a member from rural Ontario which well understands that it is going to be hammered and hurt by the implementation of this policy.

I understand, as someone who has over the years watched the regulatory agency, the Ontario Highway Transport Board, manage the affairs of this industry—in fact, I can think back to a period about 15 years ago, when Mr Shoniker and his colleagues were involved in a particularly interesting set of regulatory matters affecting some of this industry. It's not, quite frankly, something that we've debated a great deal in the Legislature certainly in the time that I have been here.

I understand there are pressures in the marketplace that are certainly causing the minister, the government and the industry some pains at the present time. But I want to say again, I am opposing this policy and I'm opposing this bill because without a doubt in my mind, it is going to hurt and hurt seriously the people I represent in rural Ontario.

I want to begin my remarks this afternoon by asking the House to reflect that we are dealing with a matter of transportation policy and that in this province and country, from the outset, because of our geography especially, issues of transportation and communication have been central to this assembly and to the national Parliament in Ottawa. Why is that? I think it's quite obvious that in a country of some 30 million people with a territory as large as the Dominion of Canada is and certainly as the province of Ontario is, it shouldn't surprise any member of the Legislature and any citizen or any observer of this kind of a debate why issues of transportation would be so very important.

I represent a very large district 400 kilometres to the northeast of this capital city, Toronto. When my American and some of my European friends come, one of the things that they are struck by is what one of them once called the tyranny of distance. I mentioned in a debate here I think just this week that in my county, if you leave the town of Arnprior, which is in the southeast corner of the county, and you go to the northeastern corner of the county, up near Mattawa, you will have driven over 200 kilometres, just within one county. I'm often embarrassed by the kind of mileage claims that I submit to the Legislature by virtue of my responsibilities as a local member. I'm going to go home this weekend and, over the course of three rather busy days, without any effort,

I'm going to drive over 1,000 kilometres just going to events and meetings in my district, and the Minister of Agriculture, if he were here, would say, "I know what that's like."

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): And you have a small riding.

Mr Conway: The member for Rainy River says I represent a small district, and relative to the imperial domain that is the district of Rainy River, he's absolutely right.

It is not lost on me that in Ontario today over 45% of the citizenry lives within 30 minutes or 30 kilometres of this very spot. So we have a situation today in a province with 11 million people where almost a majority of those people live, Madam Speaker, in areas like yours, urban or suburban Toronto. That's clearly affecting the policymaking both of the assembly and of the government.

But I say seriously to the House and to the minister—I'm pleased to see he's rejoined us—that from the very beginning of political debate in this country, issues of transportation have been central, and they've been central because, to put it bluntly, we are a relatively few people scattered over an enormous territory. This issue, bus deregulation, is an issue of fundamental transportation policy and justice at a time when there is much change in the land, I accept. But when I hear people, not just in this government but in other governments and at other times, say to me, "What we really need is a public transportation policy that reflects market pressures. We have to deregulate. We have to let the market decide," let me say that John A. Macdonald had it right 120 years ago when he struggled with his national transportation policy, and when he observed that if we let market policies decide transportation issues in this country, let me tell you, the rural hinterland, the west, the north, wouldn't have very much to say. There would certainly never have been a so-called national dream, a Canadian Pacific railroad, if we had let market forces decide.

1550

My colleague from Oakwood was rightly pointing out some of what the industry is now saying, and these capitalists are not fools; they understand some of the unique characteristics of the Canadian marketplace. Just as the old CPR syndicate understood 120 years ago, without government involvement and regulation there would not have been a CPR, there would not have been a transcontinental link, because it made no sense economically.

How many times have we been told by everyone from Goldwin Smith to latter-day acolytes of the same policy that if you just look at Canada from the point of view of market forces, there wouldn't be a country? It has only been by dint of political will and regulation that there has been a transcontinental domain that we call Canada and a transportation network that helped give it birth, give it strength and give it meaning. I would be the first to say that politicians of another era got overzealous and did some rather foolish things. Where we needed really only one national transcontinental, we got three and we're still paying the price for a national rail policy that seemed at times to operate on the notion that you built sections of the railroad, not to carry passengers but to carry elections.

That notwithstanding, I simply want to say to the minister and to the government and to the House that a policy that calls for pure deregulation, that calls for "Let the market decide," is going to fly in the face of a fundamental Canadian reality that has been understood by the political, the business, the labour and the community leadership of this province and country for decades and centuries.

I have before me Bill 39, and I listened carefully to the minister's comments and I don't doubt that he believes what he said. In the first eight or nine months of watching the minister—I haven't dealt with him too often, but I'm impressed by his interest and by his enthusiasm. He knows a lot more about some aspects of this business than I'll ever know. Since I buy a car every year, perhaps in another life we can do some business.

I want to say to him that, speaking now primarily to my principal concern, which is what this policy is going to do to the rural communities I represent, every day there is a bus that leaves the community where I now reside, Pembroke. That city, located on the Ontario-Quebec border about 90 miles north of Ottawa, is the point of departure for the daily bus to Toronto. The bus to Toronto trundles across the county to Eganville, up to Golden Lake and Killaloe, Wilno, Barry's Bay, Combermere, Paudash, across those Hastings communities of Maynooth, Bancroft, Apsley, on to Peterborough and, yes, its destination is that great metropolitan world in which we are now situate.

I want to tell the minister that in places like Eganville and Killaloe and Wilno and Combermere and Barry's Bay, there will be no bus to Toronto if this policy is implemented.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Do they still have an environmental station in Killaloe?

Mr Conway: No, they don't. The weather station is gone, I say to the member from Halton.

I'm deadly serious about this. I grew up in one of these little towns, and the bus to Toronto was a very important link. It was the only link many of these people had, and it would not have been there had there not been a regulatory requirement on Voyageur Colonial to cross-subsidize that route against their much more lucrative routes that serve in at least one other case another part of my constituency.

I want to be fair. Let me tell the minister and the House, I have little worry about the motor coach industry's interest in serving the Highway 17 corridor from Ottawa through Kanata to Arnprior, Renfrew, Cobden, Pembroke, Petawawa, Deep River, Stonecliffe and on to Mattawa and North Bay, because it is a trunk route from Ottawa. It's actually Montreal-Ottawa-Pembroke-North Bay-Sudbury. That is a very attractive route, relatively speaking, and I suspect that it will do a good business in either a regulated or an unregulated environment.

There will be no difficulty, I suspect, for my constituents who live along the Highway 17 corridor, because it's on a major line, but it is for all of those people in the rural reaches of particularly south-central and south-western Renfrew county, in Hastings, in Haliburton, in Peterborough county, to name just four areas in my part of the province, that I say to you that without some kind

of regulatory requirement, there will be no bus to Toronto. It is simply not going to make any sense.

I did some calling today; I phoned a couple of my bus terminals. It's something I've been planning to do, and I will do it one of these days, because I'm favoured. Her Majesty provides me with a car allowance to drive to Toronto, and I drive it every week. The Highway Traffic Act, the Queen's constabulary and God willing, I'm going to continue to do that for some time. I drive, as I will late tonight, to Pembroke, and it's no problem for me.

Mr Colle: You drive too slowly.

Mr Conway: The member for Oakwood says I drive too slowly. I don't know that that's fair.

I'm telling the minister and I'm telling the House, and I'm sure there are other members here—I know the member from Hastings and the member from Stormont will understand what I'm talking about. You go to the bus terminal in Barry's Bay or Eganville or Killaloe or Wilno—and I've done it; I used to be a paper-boy; we used to go to the bus terminal to get our Toronto papers to distribute to the community—and who's there? By and large, and increasingly, it's senior citizens and it's students.

If you are a young person, a student in Killaloe, and you go to the University of Guelph or the University of Toronto or the University of Waterloo or Brock and you can't arrange transportation with a friend, the way you come back and forth is by bus.

If you're in Barry's Bay, trying to get to Guelph on a Sunday afternoon, if this policy takes effect there will be no bus going to Toronto on any kind of a regularly scheduled route. There may be some charters, there are now, but the Toronto bus going down the road on a daily, scheduled basis carrying sick people to the medical services in Peterborough and Toronto, students to university and college, people who by virtue of either choice or income don't have a car or a half-ton truck, is their only method and means of "public transit."

I asked my staff today to get me the spending estimates of the minister's department. I thought to myself—and I don't mean this to provoke members from the urban communities, whether they're from Toronto or Ottawa. It's not lost on me where my friend the critic on transportation for my party resides and, quite frankly, what he did in a previous life. But it's interesting reading the minister's spending estimates, and I'm thinking now, if I were a senior citizen living in Eganville and I was threatened with the loss of the only public transit I've got—there is none other. The federal government took our trains away a long time ago.

1600

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Shame on them.

Mr Conway: The fact that we weren't using them to any great extent in the advent of cars and trucks gave the federal government some justification, but I agree—

Mr Shea: Very good recovery.

Mr Conway: Well, it's true. The fact of the matter is we weren't using the trains to an extent that they could be justified. But I'm thinking, if I were a rural citizen in those parts of eastern Ontario that I've described and I had these spending estimates and I read in the Eganville

Leader or in Barry's Bay This Week or in the Pembroke Observer that the bus is going to close, that there's going to be no regularly scheduled bus particularly to Toronto, and then I picked up the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's spending estimates for 1995-96 and read that in just two or three categories the provincial government was going to be spending nearly \$100 million of my tax money to support the excellent operations of GO Transit in the greater Toronto area, and I saw that another \$257 million of my tax money was going to support municipal transit systems in communities like Ottawa, Kitchener, London, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Chatham, Cornwall and whatever, I don't know exactly—I think I would be right in saying that the appropriation of \$257 million is going to go towards, as it says, municipal transit systems—as a rural constituent I would say: "I understand that. My kids, my neighbours, my siblings are in Metro, they're in Toronto, they're in Windsor. I understand how, in these urban areas, you want to have public transit, and it makes sense that we support it."

Then I would think: "Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent by my government to support public transit. I don't expect a TTC in Denbigh or in Kaladar or in Wilno or in Combermere, but I have a bus. That's my one and only public transit, and now it's going to go? Now I'm being told that in the interests of marketplace deregulation, I'm going to lose the one and only public transit I've got and that I have to stand by and continue to support very worthy urban transit systems."

I suspect my constituents would say on the latter point, "We understand that, but where's the fairness?" If there's anybody on the government or treasury benches who imagines that out of this marketplace there is going to be born a phoenixlike entrepreneurship that's going to say, "I'm going to organize some kind of regularly scheduled bus service that's going to run between Eganville and Apsley," you are dreaming in Technicolor; you believe in the tooth fairy.

The one thing I know about the Minister of Transportation is that he is not a man given to fanciful, dreams and I suspect he doesn't believe in the tooth fairy, which is why I think I'm getting to like him. I'm trying to be polite because, I've got to tell you, this is serious. People I represent are really concerned.

I said earlier that one of the things I've intended to do and haven't done that would be a bloody good thing for me and for a lot of us in this place to do—some of you probably have done it, and it's an admission that I shouldn't make—one of these days I'm going to park my rear end on a bus in Pembroke and come to Toronto. I suspect that when I'm finished with that trip, and I have taken it as a student, I might add, but it was a long time ago, I'm going to have an even keener appreciation for older people and young people and poor people who can't own a car, who don't own a truck, who don't have relatives but who have to get to the Princess Margaret Hospital for that cancer treatment or to be there with a loved one who is getting that treatment.

It's not lost on me—I'd better be careful because this will get me in some trouble—that when I go to the terminals here in Toronto or to the airport in Ottawa, I look around and see some pretty deluxe, publicly subsidized places from which to travel. You ought to go to

some of the bus stations around the province. Some of them are not bad, but I tell you that some of them are no hell; they say a lot about the face of support for and interest in a lot of people at the lower socioeconomic level.

I remember as a student taking the bus to some interesting places. Boy, I'll tell you. It's the stuff of great movies: *Going Down the Road*, *The Last Picture Show*.

Mr Colle: Bus Stop.

Mr Conway: Is there a movie called *Bus Stop*? Never heard of it.

Mr Colle: Marilyn Monroe.

Mr Conway: Oh, well, Marilyn Monroe. Any movie with Marilyn Monroe I will want to screen.

Mr Shea: It didn't have a lot to do with transportation, mind you.

Mr Conway: But I'm serious, and I say to my friends, just think about it. Go to the train station in Ottawa or Union Station in Toronto. Go to the terminals at Pearson or the one in Ottawa, which is the one I know best, and then go to your neighbourhood bus terminal and just ask yourself, what do these facilities say about the relative importance we attach as government to people who travel by plane, by train and by bus?

I repeat, there will be no dynamic in the marketplace that is going to put on the roads of Renfrew, Hastings, Victoria-Haliburton and a number of other rural communities the kinds of buses that have been put there by the regulatory environment. I'm not worried. I'm not in the slightest worried about what I will call the Highway 401-QEW-400 corridor. As I said earlier, even along the Highway 17 corridor between Ottawa and Sudbury the market will provide, I think, relative efficiency and justice, but I simply say to the minister that in communities I have enumerated a number.

I will read for the record an interesting article. I'm sure the minister saw it. My colleague from Essex South is here and I'm sure he's going to participate in this debate as well. There was an interesting article in the *Toronto Star* of April 7, 1996, written by Bruce Campion-Smith called "Deregulation Threatens Rural Bus Routes." Let me just read a bit of it. The dateline is Leamington.

"The Greyhound bus is called the Scenicruiser 2. And on the four-hour milk run to Windsor from London, it lives up to its name.

"The motor coach meanders through the towns of rural Ontario—Wardsville, Bothwell, Thamesville"—wonderful places, the stuff of Robertson Davies novels—"—and past the variety stores and hardware outlets that double as bus stops.

"This bus isn't in a hurry and neither are its passengers; for those travelling off the beaten path, they have no choice.

"Back in seat 16, 68-year-old Bill Kett passes the time talking about bus travel and the need for routes just like this one.

"We have to keep our buses," he says, pumping his fist defiantly in the air. 'I don't pray much, but I'll pray these buses stay on.'

"Kett, who lives near the small town of Wheatley, boards the bus a couple of times a week for the

80-minute ride to Windsor to visit relatives and see his doctor."

And on the article goes. I think Mr Kett's story is the story of thousands of Ontarians who feel deeply about the injurious potential of this policy.

I say with all due respect, Minister, I know your intentions are good in terms of the mitigating measures, "We're going to increase the notice period from 30 to 90 days." Well, that's nice, it's polite, but it's meaningless, and I don't mean to be nasty in saying it. It will not amount to the square root of anything.

1610

I was just looking at the list—and I'm not going to pull a Mike Harris. I won't do it. And I love the new members here. They're understandably anxious that the rules be adhered to, with the possible exception of the member for Durham West, whom I've been watching lately. Boy, she's being very, very selective about her memory. You were at your precious best the other day, I say to my friend Janet, feigning upset and worry about certain disclosures. One of your charms has always been your hardheadedness, and when you, of all people, feign an innocence in political matters, I must tell you, I find it takes my breath away.

Mrs Janet Ecker (Durham West): Talk about the pot calling the kettle black.

Mr Conway: But you see, I'm not here feigning innocence.

Mrs Ecker: Did I ever feign innocence?

Mr Conway: You were feigning a lot of innocence the other day. I've got to tell you, one of Janet's great tours of duty is that she used to be aide-de-camp to the fearless Francis Drea and I want to say to the new members that no greater internship could a young politico serve, but that's not germane to this bill. But there is a list—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Listen, Frank's like most Irishmen I know, a pretty formidable character.

There is a list of communities to be affected, and I'm just going to read part of this, because Mike Harris stood here one day or one week and he read off every lake, stream and creek from Slate Falls to Bainsville.

Here are some of the communities threatened by this policy: Actinolite, Atikokan, Alliston, Alton, Angus, Apsley, Arthur, Baldwin, Bancroft, Barry's Bay, Beeton, Burk's Falls, Combermere, Collingwood, Dunnville, Eganville, Elmvalle, Fenelon Falls, Fort Frances, Frasersville, Grand Valley, Hanover, Haliburton, Greenbank, Havelock, Ignace, Huntsville, Kaladar, Killaloe, Kingsville, Lindsay—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Members want to make light of this. I'm telling you—

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): How many people in Killaloe?

Mr Conway: Six hundred, and I say to the member for Lambton, they understand that they are not Kingston but they just want a measure of justice. I want you to reflect, if in this House we are going to appropriate \$350 million of their dollars to support, as I believe we should, GO Transit and municipal transit systems, my constituents in places like Killaloe will understand why that makes sense, but what they will want in Killaloe, in

Combermere and Wilno—let me go on—Listowel, Madoc, Meaford, Maynooth, Maple Leaf, Omeme, Palgrave, Port Dover, Sharbot Lake, Shelburne, South River, Tillsonburg, Tweed, Wardsville, Walkerton, Wilno, Woodview, and that's just a very short list—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: The point, I say to the member, there are—

Interjections.

Mr Conway: The Minister of Natural Resources is here and he's got many of these communities and he will know of what I speak. I suspect that in his area the 35 corridor will probably be all right; I don't what runs up there any more.

It is a serious issue for these communities. It's not just an issue for the community in terms of the passenger transport, but there is also a parcel service that has often been a part of these kinds of transportation networks as well. I simply say to the minister, if these people are to be left with the hope that the market is going to now fill the void, they know precisely what that means. That means their only system of public transit will wither and die very quickly.

It's too bad my friend the Minister of Rural Affairs is not here, because out in these places they're starting to get a sense that this government, despite its protestations to the contrary, is doing a lot of things by way of withdrawing service from rural communities. Many of these little places are losing their government office. Their MNR office is closing, their ag office is closing, their ag college is probably going or being so downsized that they'll be on their way to Guelph. Their highways are special in a way they have not been for some time, and I know it's not all the minister's fault, but you know, it's one of those visible signs.

I've got to say to my friend the minister, I was driving up Highway 41 the other day through the domain of the member from Frontenac, who sits sagelike between the ministers of natural resources and transportation, and from the head of Mazinaw Lake to Denbigh it is just one hell of a mess. I have never seen it as bad. I suppose if one had a car like that of the member for Frontenac-Addington, it would probably cushion the blow to some extent.

I must digress for a moment and say to my friend from Frontenac that one of his predecessors, the eclectic J. Earl McEwen, drove an even bigger car. I once said to J. Earl: "You know, I would never drive a car so large in the northern regions of Addington county. What do they say when you pull into a farm lane in Abinger township? What do they think when the local member comes to call in a block-long belchmobile?"

His answer was quite prudent and probably much wiser than I could ever imagine. He said, "They think what they should think: Somebody important has come to call." J. Earl, if you're listening, I'm sorry if I've embarrassed you.

I don't mean to go on, and I'm going to conclude these remarks by simply saying that it is a serious matter. It is a very serious matter for rural Ontario. We're not happy about what's happening to our roads. We are not happy about the withdrawal of many visible signs of the provincial government's presence. We are not happy at the

prospect that our only public transportation system is going to be taken away.

I hope before the debate concludes this afternoon the minister is going to give an undertaking that he's going to offer more than his initial speech on the introduction of second reading debate proffered to my constituents, because these people are aware of what has happened in other jurisdictions. They know, for example, that in the United States, under deregulation, within a very, very short period of time the number of US communities that had been receiving bus service was reduced by 50%, and they expect that to be the experience of their Ontario. The Thatcher experience with deregulation had a similarly negative effect on rural and outlying areas.

These people, as I said earlier, expect to be treated fairly, and they are deeply concerned that this government's policy is going to leave them without fairness and, more importantly, without that regularly scheduled bus going down the road to places like Peterborough and Toronto to take people to the doctor, to the cancer clinic, or to take their kids to school or elderly people to visit friends and relatives.

That's the concern I have, it's a real concern shared widely by many of my constituents in rural communities, and that's the reason I'll be voting against Bill 39 unless and until the minister can provide me and my rural constituents with some greater indication of how he's going to provide for them the kind of public transit that this Legislature, I repeat, votes hundreds of millions of dollars to support in communities from Ottawa to Windsor, and most especially here in Her Majesty's great metropolitan community that we know as Toronto.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I want to compliment my colleagues from Oakville and Renfrew North. I'll be brief because to try and say what has been said any better would only end up being embarrassing to me. But I want to emphasize that I come from small, urban-rural Ontario, and in that list of names of towns are the communities of Tilbury, Wheatley, Leamington, Kingsville and Essex. Bus service means a great deal to them.

My father was a mechanic for Greyhound prior to his death in 1968, and I can recall at that time when my dad would go out to fix buses on the road that I'd sit behind the wheel and pretend I was driving one. I'd hate to think there would come a day when the Greyhound bus wouldn't come through town. I suspect, although I haven't seen the agreement, that the only reason the Greyhound bus comes through town is so that it can protect other routes.

I would hope the minister and his staff would take that into consideration and not do anything that would jeopardize what bus service we have left in rural Ontario.
1620

Hon Mr Palladini: I certainly did enjoy listening to the members for Essex South, Renfrew North and Oakwood. I do share their concerns, but I am convinced that under regulation—clearly municipalities that the member for Renfrew North was mentioning, we could probably add many more municipalities to that list that have lost services under regulation. I am convinced that we can do better with full deregulation. We could have

gone immediately to full deregulation, but we chose to do things in an orderly fashion.

As far as the comments that the member for Oakwood said about one of our senior people back in a letter that he read, I met with the people with the busing industry back in August and I informed them then that I was not going to implement full deregulation.

We want to do deregulation in an orderly fashion. We want to make sure that whatever needs to get done so towns, municipalities that have lost bus services, are actually going to have an opportunity, because we feel that with deregulation there are going to be entrepreneurs that will really seek an opportunity to develop feeder lines that will give the major bus companies an opportunity to make it a worthwhile, possibly profitable, route. This is key.

We must do some things to protect the providers. Right now I am concerned about the end users, because we do have to have transportation available for them, but we also have to have the providers in place to give that transportation, and I believe deregulation is going to bring new people into the busing business.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I appreciate the warm and schmoozy noises from the Minister of Transportation, but the end result of this, and I think we all understand it, as the member for Renfrew North has said and the member for Oakwood and the member for Essex South, is that there are going to be communities that presently do have bus services, people can presently use that bus service, and they're not going to be able to do that.

I see my friend the Minister of Northern Development sitting across the aisle from us, the fellow who made assurances about northern air travel. He's ended up providing subsidies. He said that wasn't the case. I don't know whether the Minister of Transportation is contemplating providing subsidies where the private sector does not take up his challenge. He's probably not.

I would suggest to you that the Minister of Northern Development knows full well that in many places across northern Ontario there are going to be places where there will be in the future no air service unless he gets into the subsidy business in a bigger way, and now there's going to be no bus service for even smaller communities.

I want to say that the direction of this government seems pretty clear. It is an abandonment of what people in rural parts of this province believe to be their right. It's fair. As the member for Renfrew North talked about the subsidies that we all agreed to for the large municipalities to provide transportation, so should we in the rural parts of our province have some belief that the province of Ontario will also look after rather basic needs in transportation.

I will not be supporting Bill 39 for the very reason that we cannot trust this government to provide those services to rural Ontario, to northern Ontario, that we pay taxes to get.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I enjoyed the remarks of the member for Renfrew North very much because he pointed out what could happen if we proceed with this piece of legislation. I suspect as well that his contention that there have not been significant contributions being made by backbenchers within the government

is an accurate one, because if the members on the government benches were aware of the consequences for some of their ridings I'm sure they would not be as eager to support this legislation.

When I think of places like Wardsville and Kaladar and Woodville, and virtually any small town across this province, I know there can be a problem. I know what happens when the minister comes in, or the government comes in, and makes a presentation to caucus. They assure everybody that everything is going to be fine; in fact you're probably going to get more service than you had before, you'll be told. It simply doesn't happen.

I recall a previous minister in a previous government who talked about the fact that there had to be something done with the trucking industry. That minister at the time said, "Oh, by the way, this is not deregulation, this is something else." I recall well informing that minister that in fact it was deregulation and there would be significant consequences for this province.

The same is going to be true of this situation. Yes, those of us who live on routes that are popular, that have large populations, are going to continue to have service. There will be a bus from Toronto to St Catharines, to Niagara Falls, that will continue. What I worry about is Owen Sound and other communities along the route, like Arthur, that are going to be a problem. I hope the members on the government back benches will tell the Premier and the minister and high government officials what they really think of deregulation of busing in this province.

Mr Colle: Just to wrap up, I do not underestimate how difficult the challenge is that the minister has before him. I think he's trying to balance a lot of critical interest. There's no underestimating the challenge he has before him. I just think that in terms of advice perhaps what I'm hearing is that you do need an impact study of what the consequences are going to be.

One of the consequences in the United States, too, was that when some of the bus routes were taken over by individual entrepreneurs, usually small entrepreneurs, as soon as they became successful a lot of them were squeezed out by bigger companies. Even though one person may find a little niche service, what's to protect that entrepreneur who basically put together a few dollars to put a small bus route together from being squeezed out? I think that is one of the patterns that developed in the United States.

As I say again, the other troubling thing is that deregulation in the United States caused over 5,000 communities to lose their bus services.

So there is more to it than deregulation. I think there's got to be a comprehensive transportation strategy and maybe there are alternatives in terms of using different types of vehicles etc, but there has to be comprehensive input that goes beyond just saying we have to scrap regulation. Because when you enter into it from that perspective, I think you get yourself into difficulties. The bottom line is that roads are subsidized by the taxpayers, big city transportation is subsidized by the taxpayers, so why shouldn't small communities also have a little bit of help from government in ensuring they've got good basic transportation. All they're asking for is a seat on that bus. That's not a luxury, it's a basic necessity.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I'm very happy to be able to take part in this debate. Let me start off by noting that for many years now Liberal and Conservative governments have been following a policy of deregulation: deregulation of the airlines; deregulation of trains; deregulation of trucking, and now deregulation of busing. It hasn't worked in airlines; airline fares have shot up. It hasn't worked in trucking; truck safety is now an incredible problem in this jurisdiction and elsewhere. It hasn't worked in the rail industry either, as we see now rail line after rail line shutting down. This is just more government by lemmings. Liberal governments in the past have done it, Conservative governments in the past have done it, so now this Conservative government will do it.

1630

This is also a bill that is about doublespeak. It is doublespeak. The government stands up and says: "Oh, deregulation will work fine. Communities in rural and northern Ontario have nothing to fear." But the fact is, they know that if they allowed deregulation to happen right now, the floodgates would open so fast that community after community after community would be abandoned in the next couple of weeks. So what do they do? They bring in this Bill 39 to hold back the floodgates for a while, hold back the floodgates so you don't have wholesale abandonment right away and you don't have wholesale cutthroat competition right away. They'll ease it in. That's what this bill is: It's doublespeak. It strengthens regulation of the intercity bus industry for a while, but then by 1998 you cut the floor out and you allow that cutthroat competition and that wholesale abandonment to happen.

It's quite bizarre. Why would you actually strengthen bus regulation, which this interim bill does, and then afterwards say, "Regulation doesn't work, so we're abandoning it"? It shows to me a clear lack of logic and just how far this government is prepared to go to engage in doublespeak.

I want to talk about who this bill will hurt. The only people who will benefit from this bill are foreign carriers and carriers from outside the province. They will no longer have to justify their presence based on public necessity; they just jump in. You may say, "The more the merrier." The problem is that when a system is deregulated, everyone and his sister jumps in and then the problems start. On the more profitable routes, fares may go down in the short term, but that won't last long as larger operators muscle out the smaller ones.

What about the smaller communities? Many people in small communities have cars, but many do not. Who are they? The poor, students, senior citizens, the disabled. We know this government doesn't care about those folks. After all, this government for the past eight months has been pointing the finger at those folks, saying they're to blame for some of Ontario's problems. It's people who are poor who are the heart of Ontario's economic problems, they say. It is the disabled who need to be forced back to work by a simple change in the definition of disability. So we already know this government doesn't care about those folks, but all those folks will be hurt by what is going to happen.

I want to reflect on what this government has done to prepare or to set the stage for deregulation. Has the government done any economic impact studies? Have they actually gone out there and looked at the potential impact on the economy? No, they haven't, no economic impact studies at all; none in the hundreds of towns and villages and cities in Ontario that will lose service. They have not studied the impact on the farm community, on the small business sector—nowhere.

They have not asked the industry to give any compensation to the public for the privilege of running private buses over the public roads. They've done none of this. In fact, what's going on here is this: The public is being asked to pay the taxes that build the roads that are essential to the bus industry, but the bus industry is no longer going to be asked to give anything back to the public. It certainly is not going to be asked to give anything back to the public who reside in the small towns and villages in rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

The government says over and over again, "Oh, this will be wonderful; this will be fine." This has all been heard before, and I want to look at some of the examples from before.

First of all, there's the American experience. In 1982, that great guru of the right wing, Ronald Reagan, deregulated the bus industry in the United States. The resulting reductions in service were swift and irreversible in rural United States. Just like this government, just like this right-wing government, the Reagan administration attempted to soothe concerns from small towns and rural areas by arguing that small owner-operators would fill the gap left when the national bus companies left a town without service. And to their credit, many small owner-operators tried to operate vans, minivans, minibuses on routes abandoned by the national carriers. But often when a small operator appeared to be succeeding, guess what? The big national companies would re-enter the market and run the route at a loss, cutthroat competition, and put the small operator out of business. The national carrier would drain the market financially and then, after doing that, it would revoke service again, leaving the community no better off. They didn't want competition.

Small towns were abandoned in droves in the United States. At the time of the US deregulation, a Mr Frank Nageotte, who was a vice-chairman of Greyhound Corp in the United States, told the Wall Street Journal that with deregulation in the state of "Florida, we were able to cut out 90% to 95% of our small towns." He bragged about it. Obviously, the minister hasn't read about the Greyhound Corp experience in the United States. Frank Crabtree, the director of the motor carrier division of the West Virginia Public Services Commission at the time of US deregulation, reported that within days of deregulation, "Greyhound and Virginia Stage Lines, an operating subsidiary of Trailways, Inc, filed petitions for massive route abandonment." In fact, within one year of deregulation, Greyhound had already abandoned over 1,300 stops. By January 1, 1986, 3,766 communities had been abandoned, according to the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Between deregulation and November 1991, the number of US cities with intercity bus service fell from 11,820 to

5,690, a decrease of 52%. As upsetting as these numbers are, they would have been worse if many of the state governments had not subsidized some bus lines in order to give service to some smaller communities. This Ontario government has already rejected that notion, and although Ontario is densely populated compared to other Canadian provinces, even in southern rural Ontario we are spread thin in comparison to American standards. If the US experience was bad, the Ontario situation will be much worse.

Then there's the British experience. Until this government, it was probably the worst right-wing government that we've seen. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher deregulated the bus industry in an attempt, she said, to provide increased efficiencies through competition. The Thatcher government's white paper on deregulation asserted that "without the dead hand of restrictive regulation, fares could be reduced now on many routes and the operator would still make a profit. New and better services would be provided. More people would travel." Does that sound familiar? That sounds like the current Minister of Transportation, or should I say the minister of potholes, as he's quickly becoming known as. In fact, the opposite happened in Great Britain, as the dead hand of market monopolies drove out competition, pushed up fares and caused ridership to plummet.

In Britain, the process occurred differently than in the United States. In the US, the big national carriers used cutthroat competition until smaller operators gave up. But according to an Oxford University study, the American fight to the death rarely occurred in Britain. Instead, in Britain there was a shift away from the on-the-road competition to boardroom competition, with an acceleration of takeovers, leading to consolidation, buying out competitors and an increase in the power of a few large bus companies.

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Accountants at Price Waterhouse interviewed 150 transit managers about the impact of deregulation. According to this report, these managers believed that "direct entry...only resulted in loss of profits for both companies as fares were reduced and costs increased.... Acquisition was generally regarded as a sounder strategy for gaining market share."

According to the president of the Transport and General Workers' Union, "The top six or seven bus companies in Great Britain own over 50% of the total bus market." Thus, the premise of deregulation—let the market reign and the consumer will benefit—was proven wrong. The market was freed, concentration increased and the consumer lost.

Deregulation advocates in Britain continually point to the fact that private bus companies are travelling more kilometres as an indication that deregulation has succeeded at bringing better service to the consumer. A more detailed look indicates that the consumer has abandoned the new deregulated industry in droves. The increases in distance driven is due to the use of so-called minibuses and midibuses, which seat up to 16 and 35 passengers respectively. Since deregulation, the use of these buses has almost doubled, so although there are more buses travelling more kilometres, the system capacity has not increased and actually fewer people are using buses.

Market monopolies have led to dramatic fare increases. Across Britain, fares increased 47% between 1985 and 1993, far outstripping inflation, which was a cumulative 35% in the same period. In no year did the bus fare index fall, and once market monopolies began to set in, fare hikes became larger. Who suffers from that? People on fixed incomes, like senior citizens, people who have had their social assistance cheque cut by 22%, people who are unemployed, people who are on workers' compensation, people who are disabled. They all get thrown out of the system. They're exactly the people who need to use buses. I've heard nothing from the government on how these people are going to be served, because there is nothing. They haven't done any market studies, and they haven't done any market studies because they don't care about those people.

Looking just a little further at Britain, with deregulation there is no necessity to gain regulatory board approval for schedules or route changes. Frequent changes meant anarchy ruled the bus industry, leaving the passengers who could afford it confused and often without a bus. The result was system chaos. In the early 1980s, before deregulation, bus ridership was holding steady at 4.5 billion passengers per year. Since deregulation, bus ridership has fallen every year. Between deregulation and 1994, bus ridership has fallen by more than 25%. By 1989, only 4 billion rides were registered and in 1994 only 3.25 billion passenger journeys were taken each year.

Unlike the United States, the British government still gives subsidies to private bus operators to ensure that smaller centres are serviced. The Ontario government once again has ruled out that option. So how are smaller communities in northern Ontario and rural Ontario going to get any service?

Let me go to another example, the experience in the Canadian airline industry, which was deregulated by the Liberals and the Conservatives. The new transportation act came into place in 1988. At the same time, the main industry players were Air Canada, Canadian Airlines International and Wardair, and several smaller companies: National Pacific, Vacationair, Air Transat, Québecair, Nordair, Provincial Airways. They were all part of a competitive industry. By 1990, most of the smaller companies had been driven out or had been taken over by Air Canada or Canadian Airlines International. In the early 1990s, continuing troubles at Canadian Airlines forced the carrier into an ownership relationship with—guess who?—American Airlines. Deregulation resulted not in the creation of more companies and more competition in Canada; it resulted in a net benefit for a large American company.

The period since deregulation has been characterized by dramatic price wars pushing the companies into huge financial losses followed by more acquisitions and takeovers, moving the market closer and closer to monopoly conditions. That's what's happening.

Fare reductions between Canadian Airlines and Air Canada in the early 1990s resulted in the Mulroney government purchasing unneeded airplanes from Canadian Airlines to make the company more attractive to American Airlines and save the company from bankruptcy. Yet despite the price wars and competition, the

average price of a domestic airplane ticket rose at an incredible pace. In terms of the price index, from 1987 until 1990 the price index went up by 131. In other words, despite all this competition that was supposed to happen, despite all the good things that were supposed to happen, there were fewer people providing service and the price index went up.

What do we think is going to happen here? A policy document from the Ontario Motor Coach Association, written before the group's apparent change on deregulation, suggests the same movement towards unregulated market monopoly that occurred in the airline industry will occur in the bus industry if bus deregulation goes forward.

The Ontario Motor Coach Association document states: "An open market would result in a significant shakeout, with scheduled and charter markets dominated by US-based carriers. Ontario operators would be limited to less attractive markets, or to subcontract or subordinate alliance relationships with outside carriers." From the same document: "The Ontario Motor Coach Association believes that with changes to regulation there are good reasons to fear adverse impact on...the viability of domestic motor coach operators."

That's the Ontario Motor Coach Association saying that. That's the same association of bus operators this government says favours this. Somebody is telling a tale here. Someone is engaging in doublespeak.

Let's take this a bit further. What will the outlook be for Ontario? With no subsidy to maintain service on unprofitable routes, on rural and small-town Ontario routes, the reality is that rural and small-town Ontario and northern Ontario will be badly hurt by the Harris government's decision to deregulate. It is easy to predict that deregulation will open up a period of true chaos in the bus industry. Literally hundreds of towns can expect to lose their service. Seniors and students will be hard hit, as will small business people and farmers who rely on the bus parcel service. For them the chaos will be personal. The chaos will affect their lives and their businesses and their communities.

The Ontario Motor Coach Association, again, in a study done in September 1995, supports the concerns I'm raising. According to the Ontario Motor Coach Association, "while deregulation might offer some potential benefits, it suffers from major drawbacks, including impacts on the viability of the domestic motor coach industry and on the integrity, quantity and quality of services provided to the public."

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Further, the Ontario Motor Coach Association report acknowledges that continued regulation "will ensure continuing, reliable and affordable service to some 1,110 Ontario communities." But that won't happen with deregulation.

Again: "Areas outside these major centres will not receive the same attention as they are less profitable. Services that are discontinued will be replaced at best by a service of inferior quality. Some discontinued services will not be replaced" at all.

So what's going to happen? I want to read a list of communities. You see, the government hasn't done any studies; it hasn't done any economic impact studies. But

some folks have been out there actually talking to communities, and these are the communities which believe they are going to face a loss of service, that their community is going to be affected:

Actinolite, Atikokan—a community in my constituency, Alliston, Alton, Angus, Apsley, Armstrong, Arthur, Aylmer, Baldwin, Bailieboro, Ballantrae, Bancroft, Barry's Bay, Beaverton, Beeton, Berkeley, Bewdley, Bismarck, Blackstock, Blind River, Bothwell, Bracebridge, Brentwood, Brown Hill, Brooklin, Brunner, Burke's Falls, Burleigh Falls, Canadian Forces Base Borden, Carleton Place, Canborough, Cameron, Camilla, Cayuga, Chapleau—another northern Ontario community, Chatsworth, Chelsey, Clifford, Coboconk, Cochrane—another northern Ontario community, Collingwood, Columbus, Combermere, Craigleith, Creemore, Delhi, Dorking, Dornoch, Dundalk, Dunville, Durham;

Eganville, Elfrida, Elmwood, Elmvale, Elora, Espanola, Essex, Fenelon Falls, Fergus, Flesherton, Fort Frances, Fowler's Corners, Fraserville, Fulton, Gads Hill, Geraldton, Gorrie, Grand Valley, Gravenhurst, Greenock, Greenbank, Grimsby, Haliburton, Hanover, Harrison, Havelock, Hawkesbury, Hearst, Heidelberg, Holland Centre, Huntsville, Ignace, Ingoldsby, Iron Bridge, Iroquois Falls, Jarvis, Kaladar, Kapuskasing, Killaloe Station, Kincardine, Kingsville, Kirkland Lake, Lakefield, Leamington, Lindsay, Linwood, Listowel, Maberly, Madoc, Manilla, Manchester, Maple Leaf, Marmora, Markdale, Massey, Maynooth, Meaford, Melbourne, Mildmay, Millbank, Myrtle;

Nestleton, Neustadt, Newton, Norland, Norwood, Oakwood, Omemee, Owen Sound, Palgrave, Paudash, Pepperlaw, Perth, Port Colborne, Port Dover, Port Bolster, Port Perry, Powassan, Raglan, Red Lake, Rosedale, St Clements, St Thomas, Saintfield, Sarnia, Sharbot Lake, Shelburne, Simcoe, Smithville, Smooth Rock Falls, South River, Stayner, Strathroy, Sunderland, Sundridge, Sutton, Thamesville, Thornbury, Tilbury, Tillsonburg, Timmins, Tottenham, Trout Creek, Tweed, Upsala, Vermilion Bay, Virginia, Walkerton, Wallaceburg, Wardsville, Wasaga Beach, Wawa, Wheatley, Williamsford, Wilno, Wingham, Woodview and Wroxeter.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: The government members don't want to hear which communities are going to be left out. The government members don't want the people of Ontario to know which communities are going to be thrown out, which communities don't count any more in Conservative right-wing Ontario.

The fact is that this ideological right-wing nonsense has been tried before. It failed in the United States, it failed in Britain, and it's going to fail here. And a lot of us are going to be here to remind communities across northern and rural Ontario that you people did it, that you were the people who wrote off rural Ontario; you were the people who wrote off northern Ontario. You are the people who are going to make it impossible for people to get to a doctor, to take a bus to see a doctor. You are the people who are going to make it difficult for senior citizens, for poor people, for students, for unemployed people, for people on social assistance, to get to the communities they need to, to get a job and to look after themselves.

Let me just give you some advice. You've got a few wisenheimer civil servants over there who've told you this is going to fly. Let me tell you from some government experience that when the political fallout starts to happen from this, you won't find those civil servants anywhere. They won't be anywhere. It's going to fall on your heads. You're going to be the people who are going to have to go out there and explain to your community why you don't get bus service any more, why your community has been written off.

I'll just tell you, we are going to continue to make a point across rural and northern Ontario of exactly what you're doing, of exactly the extent to which you have written people off, of exactly the extent to which you are saying to those people that they don't matter any more in your Ontario, that they don't count, that their community doesn't count, that their small business doesn't count, and that they don't count as people.

I could go on for some time, but I sense that some of the Conservative members would like me to stop.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Oh, you want me to go on? Oh, well, I aim to please, Speaker. They want me to go on. Let me just give them a lesson in geography and what's going to happen. As Mr Conway, the member from Renfrew, pointed out, I have one of the larger constituencies in the province. Right now bus service tends to run along the Trans-Canada Highway and it tends to run along Yonge Street, Highway 11, which extends into my constituency. All these small farm villages and small towns get bus service. They get bus service either from Greyhound or Grey Goose. But do you know what Greyhound and Grey Goose are already saying? They're already saying, "Well, we'll continue to stop in the major centres, but these little places, we don't want to stop in them any more."

Mr Beaubien: But they've got to drive by them anyway.

Mr Hampton: That's right. One of the Conservative members has figured it out. He said, "They're just going to drive by them." You got it. You just figured it out. You get a prize. That's what they want to do. They don't want to stop in those small communities. They don't want to let off three or four senior citizens. They don't want to let off the university student or college student who's coming home. They want to bus right through, because when they are forced to stop, as they are now by the regulatory system, it costs them money. They're not interested in that. They're not interested in providing service. They want to maximize profit, and if maximizing profit means you chop out those little communities, they don't care.

They've already served notice that some communities that have no other alternative for transportation, no train, no aircraft—no aircraft because the Minister of Northern Development and Mines already took care of that; he made sure they're not going to have any air transportation any more. They're going to have no service, none.

We're not talking here about a 20-mile trip, a 30-mile trip, a 40-mile trip, as we might talk about in southern Ontario. We're talking about trips of 200 miles. We're talking about trips of two and a half hours. I'll tell you the communities that are going to be left out on Highway

17. Vermilion Bay is going to be left out, a nice little community. Lots of seniors live in Vermilion Bay. The little community of Wabigoon is going to be left out. A lot of native people live in Wabigoon, a lot of Metis people who scratch out a living by taking a job cutting pulpwood in the winter, scratch out a job picking wild rice in the fall, but otherwise don't get steady employment. They're going to be cut out. A little community called Dinorwic: lots of senior citizens in Dinorwic. They're not going to get bus service. A little community like Vermilion Bay isn't going to get bus service.

Interjection: You mentioned Vermilion Bay already.

Mr Hampton: I'll start at the other end. A little village called Rainy River, a thousand people: Most of the people living in Rainy River are either senior citizens or by the time this bus deregulation comes into effect they will be senior citizens. They're going to be left out. A little community called Pinewood, a little community called Stratton, a little community called Barwick, a little community called Emo, a little community called Devlin, a little community called La Vallee, a little community called Mine Centre, a little community called Atikokan, and two or three first nations, Nicickousemenecaning First Nation, Manitou Rapids First Nation, Seine River First Nation, they're all going to be left out. There's no alternative. There's no taxi service. There's no limousine service—nothing. There's no aircraft service.

1700

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): You never think that might start up?

Mr Hampton: The member opposite repeats the argument that was repeated in the United States and in Britain. He says there will be lots of small operators. The experience in the United States was, yes, some small operators tried to open up and as soon as they started to make a profit, the big companies cut price, offered service again and drove them out of business because they don't want the competition.

It's the exact same thing that's happened in the airline business: two major companies now in Canada offering airline services. Prices have gone up. Right? They're both struggling financially; in fact, one of them has had to sell part of itself to an American airline company. That's what we're going to see here. In certain parts of the province you're going to see American bus lines come in and they cherry-pick the best routes. Companies from other provinces will come in and they will cherry-pick the best routes. But community after community that are not on the best route across Ontario are going to get cut and we're going to be here to remind you.

Now some of the Liberal members want to get in on the debate. I just want to say to the Liberal members: Remember, you were the people who got us into deregulated trucking. You were the people who said, "Don't worry, deregulated trucking will not result in any safety problems," even as we have truck after truck going down the highway throwing their wheels, even as we have the present Minister of Transportation trying to announce and reannounce and reannounce another truck safety undertaking, trying to make people believe he's somehow going to get this deregulated chaos under control.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: I just tell you, it's been done before. Look, I'm trying to save you some heartache here. All right? I am. I'm trying to save you some heartache.

All of you Conservative members who represent rural Ontario—this is going to come back to haunt you. This is going to come back to bite you in a big way and before you believe what the Minister of Transportation has obviously bought without looking at, you ought to look at the figures and facts and statistics from the United States, you ought to look at the figures and facts and statistics from Great Britain and you ought to look at the number of small communities that have absolutely no service now. You ought to look at the number of communities that were written off because many of those communities will be your communities, they'll be your constituents, they'll be your people and you're the ones who will have to answer for it and we'll make sure you have to answer for it.

As I said, I could go on longer, but I suspect some of the Conservative members are happy that I'm preparing to wind up. I would ask for unanimous consent so that my colleague here from Cochrane South could—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Hampton: If I remember correctly, unanimous agreement was given when we started that we split the time. I will turn it over to my colleague from Cochrane South and you can have some further examples. Speaker, I thank you for the time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane South, take your seat a minute. Do we have unanimous consent to allow the member for Cochrane South to split the time? Yes? Thank you.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I would like to thank the honourable colleagues in the Conservative Party who have allowed unanimous consent. Normally that is the practice on a leadoff speech when it comes to an issue at times, to be able to split the time on the lead of 90 minutes to 45 minutes for each member so that members who have responsibilities in regard to their portfolios that cross those boundaries are able to do that.

Interjection: We did it to be good to you.

Mr Bisson: Of course you wanted to be good to me. I understand that.

Let me start with a bit of background and I guess a bit of historical perspective of the whole question of regulation in the province of Ontario when it comes to our transportation industry.

Most people in this House, and I think most people watching, would know that in Canada, since its inception in 1867 and even before that, there was a very strong recognition that if you were going to develop a vibrant economy with links from east to west so Canadians would be able to develop a market and develop industry, you needed to find a different way to make the links from eastern Canada to western Canada than what had been done in unregulated situations. The reality in our country, as it was in 1867 and as it is today in 1996, is that there is not the population base in Canada and in many places across this province to sustain, according to traditional free enterprise principles, a good system of transportation that responds to the needs of everybody.

Our forefathers were probably visionaries, when you think about it, because if you go back and look at the history of the 1860s, the politics of the day were fairly right-wing compared to what they are today, even with this Conservative government. There was mainly the belief that government did not have a role to play when it came to regulation and that the free market system and entrepreneurs should be given the opportunity to do things on their own to develop an economy; even more so, probably, in the United States than in Canada.

But our forefathers in this country, first of all in our federal Parliament and in our provincial parliaments as well, recognized that if we allowed our system of transportation to be developed solely by the private sector, a whole bunch of markets would not be served by the private sector because there was not the market there for a business to make a profit and operate. The federal government of the day recognized that something needed to be done.

The federal government, followed by provincial governments, played a very strong role in developing a system of transportation infrastructure. They had in their minds basically this: Yes, allow the private sector to be full partners in the system of transportation, and where possible allow them to do that in as free a way as possible, but within that context set up regulations to ensure that the profitable routes of the Montreal-Toronto-Windsor corridor are not the only ones covered but that routes, for example, from Chapeau to Timmins or from Kapuskasing to Hearst, or wherever it might be in the province of Ontario or in this country, are covered and have a good system of transportation.

I would argue that if we had taken the view in 1867 of having a totally unregulated transportation system without any leadership by federal and provincial governments, our economy as we know it today in 1996 would not be the economy we have now. Sure, certain communities in Canada would have done well, because we would have established trading links north-south strictly. The east-west links that are so important to keeping this country together as one national force would have been virtually impossible to sustain over the longer run.

I dare say, and I think my good colleague Mr Shea, the member for High Park-Swansea, would agree with this, that our country as we know it today would not exist. If we had allowed transportation to go willy-nilly on its own, we would probably have had a good system of transportation on a north-south link, from places like Toronto, Hamilton and Windsor connecting to the United States, where there are larger markets. You would have been able to do fairly good trade on the western rim of our country, Vancouver into the Seattle area, and I would argue that the southern parts of Quebec probably would have done fairly well going into the American eastern seaboard.

But as for a lot of other places in this country, like northern Ontario, like Saskatchewan and Manitoba and a number of other areas, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, our system of transportation would have left those places desolate, isolated communities. Much of the development that happened economically and the success stories we've seen in our economy of Canada have been made possible because of our system of transportation.

Coming from northern Ontario—and I'm sure my good friend the member for Sudbury East knows this—the community of Sudbury was founded how? It was founded because there was a federal government that said, "We need to build a train system that goes from one part of the country to the other, from east to west," and in doing that they discovered a huge ore body in Sudbury. That has sustained the community of Sudbury, and I would say most of north-central Ontario, for many, many years. It must be close to at least 100 years, I would think, that Sudbury has been around.

The whole area that I know as home, northeastern Ontario, was developed, by and large, because the provincial government of the day recognized that we needed to have a rail system that spurred from North Bay onwards so we're able to access our forests and develop the mills to create the wealth we needed within our economy; we're able to go up and explore the areas that were considered very remote to the rest of Ontario at that time. Put in place was what we know today as the ONR, but at the time it was known as the Temiskaming railroad, or the Temiskaming central railroad, I believe it was called.

1710

Many communities like Cobalt, New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Matheson and onwards all the way up to Moose Factory owe their existence to the system of transportation that was put in place by the federal government. The point that I'm making, that most members would recognize—

Mr Shea: You're arguing for economic imperialism.

Mr Bisson: I'm arguing that the government has a strong role and a responsibility when it comes to transportation. I agree with the members from the Conservative Party on one point: I don't believe that the system of transportation should strictly be controlled by a public sector monopoly across this country and across this province. I believe there is room within this market of Canada and the market of Ontario for the private sector to play a large role, and in some cases I would argue it plays a very positive role, because it creates competition and in itself offers cheaper transportation rates for the manufacturers of goods and products across this province.

My argument is simply this: One cannot be done at the exclusion of the other. Why I have a problem with this piece of legislation is that we're looking at bus deregulation from the perspective of saying the private sector can do it best, it knows how to run a bus company better than anybody else and we'll allow the private sector over the longer run to be the where-all and end-all when it comes to bus transportation in Ontario.

I think most members of this House will have to agree—maybe not in their vote; in their own mind—that if we go to that system, there are going to be communities in Ontario that will not have bus transportation as we know it today, at the very best. At the very worst, some communities will not have bus transportation at all, because the market in some communities in northern Ontario, and I would argue in southwestern Ontario and in eastern Ontario and in rural Ontario—there are many communities that don't have a market that is large enough to be able to sustain bus operations at a profitable level. That's just economics. That's not some edict put

forward by the NDP. It's not an edict by the bus companies or by the unions that represent the workers there or the communities they represent. That's just market conditions. That's what happens.

We should always learn by our history. One of the mistakes we can make as parliamentarians and as community leaders is sometimes not to take a look at our history and to recognize that Canada was built on a premise very different from what was built in the United States. The United States' view was—and it's a view that worked for them because they have the population base, and climatic conditions and everything else being part of that—that the market was large enough to allow the free market system to play a much larger role than it played in Canada. When it came to developing our transportation system, rail and road, and also air and marine, if it had not been for our federal government, and our provincial government in some cases, I think a lot of the system of transportation that we take for granted today would not have come to be created.

The second part is that there are a lot of communities that wouldn't exist in this country if it had not been for the role the federal and provincial governments played in putting in place directly a system of transportation to allow those communities to develop. Who would have been the winners at the end of that? That's a question you have to ask yourself. Who benefits by deregulation? Is it the people? In some cases, yes. I'll agree there are going to be some cases in deregulation where there are large markets, where there are many, many people using the bus system, that will benefit from increased competition. No question about that; I don't argue that for one second. But you also have to be fair on the other side of the argument, that there are going to be an equal amount of people—maybe not an equal amount of people, but there are going to be a number of people in many communities who will be negatively affected because there is not the market in many of those areas to sustain the system of transportation.

In northeastern Ontario I look, for example, at communities like Chapleau in the riding of Nickel Belt. Chapleau, for people who don't know, is a community geographically situated about two hours down the highway from Timmins; two or two and a half hours, depending on how you drive. The nearest community to Chapleau that has medical facilities sufficient enough to deal with most emergency needs is Timmins. The system we have today at one point provided bus transportation on a weekly basis. I think that's the way it was set up; I might be incorrect here and somebody may correct me. At one time it was daily and I think it went to weekly, but the idea was that you were able to at least provide some basic form of service so that the people in that community, if they needed to go to a doctor's appointment in Timmins or they needed to conduct business in Timmins, they were able to get on the bus and go to Timmins and do what they needed to do.

If you deregulate entirely the bus system, I would argue many communities other than Chapleau, communities like Hearst, Matheson and a whole bunch of other communities in between, are going to be negatively affected. You're not going to see the same level of bus service that we have today.

Who gains with that? That's a question I want you to ask yourselves. Who gains? Is it the people living in those communities? I think the answer is no. Is it the taxpayers? No, because in reality the bus system in this province is not subsidized by the provincial government. I think that's something people need to recognize. Even the ONTC bus system that is run and known as the Ontario Northland Railway—the ONR buses—is not subsidized by the people of this province. It is run as a commercial operation. The way the ONR is able to put buses into communities that don't have a market to sustain bus services and a full service is by making money from those runs from Timmins to North Bay, Timmins to Sudbury, Sudbury to Toronto. That's how they pay for those other small communities.

The government way back when that decided the ONTC had to play a role in bus transportation did so because it recognized, quite frankly, that if you did not have that system of the government coming in and filling that void and having a system of regulation in order to allow the carrier, in this case ONR, to have basically a monopoly on the area, the market would be so fragmented that you would not be able to make a go of it at all. All you would end up with at the end is bus services from Timmins to Sudbury to North Bay. If you happened to live on those routes, you'd do fine, but if you lived off those routes, you'd be without bus service.

I come back to a very, very simple point, and the point is, who's going to benefit? I think you, as Conservative members, are decent people who come to this Legislature, who really want to do the right thing for your constituents. But I think on this one, and I don't mean to be argumentative—oh, my God, we have Conservative members in the gallery. They're waving hi. You do have a seat in here, sir—both of you.

The point I'm getting at here, what I want to say to the Conservative members, is that I respect that you were elected by the majority of constituents in your communities to come to this Legislature and to try to pass legislation or to deal with issues of provincial concern. That is well understood by all members of this House. But I think in your zeal to be able to follow the ideology of your Conservative Party, you find yourselves in a position where you're saying, "We believe the private sector will do it best," and you're forgetting that, quite frankly, the private sector will do nothing in some of those communities. I think, to be fair, you have to admit that. Yes, there will be some winners with deregulation of bus services, but there will be many, many, many losers in communities across rural Ontario.

I think what you should be trying to do, rather than moving forward with bus deregulation such as you're bringing forward now, is to take a look at the various markets across Ontario and make some determinations as to how we deal with particular markets. Is there a hybrid system of some type that could be looked at by the Ministry of Transportation to say, "It makes perfectly good sense to deregulate in an area of high population where there may be a market there to be able to sustain the competition"? I still think we would have a debate from the New Democrats on that particular issue, but I think we would be a little bit less cynical if you were to try to take a look at it that way.

But to take a policy in this province when it comes to transportation and to go to a system that basically says, "We're moving away from all regulation"—because that's what you're doing here. Over the long run there will be no regulation of the bus system as you go through this process. At the very end, we'll have a totally open system with no regulation and no government presence.

I think what you should be asking the Minister of Transportation and what you should be asking Mike Harris from Nipissing—he's a northerner as well; sometimes I wonder, but he's from northern Ontario and should understand this as the Premier—is that it is not going to serve the best interests of many people in rural and northern Ontario to deregulate bus services. If you're really about a government of common sense that wants to take a commonsense approach to this, I say you have to take one step back on this one and say, listen, we need to take a look at how we can apply regulation in those markets that don't have the markets to be able to sustain full competition, and remove maybe some or all of the regulations in other areas where the markets are able to deal with it, and even if you wanted to, to have a piece of legislation that says every five years we're going to go back and we're going to examine what has happened in those jurisdictions where you have taken regulation off or you've left regulation in, and to have a flexible model so that in the end the province of Ontario and its Legislature is responding to the needs of all Ontarians, not just a few.

1720

I'm trying to be as non-partisan as I can on this one because I want the members to hear me, and I well understand that if I just stood in the House and railed at you for the next 30 minutes you would not be listening, but I have your full attention and I appreciate that.

I'm just saying, I want you to seriously think about this because I can tell you, and I think a lot of members here from the Conservative Party who represent rural Ontarians probably agree with me deep down, that ideologically—hey, listen, from a social democratic principle, I would much rather have a totally regulated system, but I'm a pragmatic socialist and I recognize that what you need to do is be able to find a balance. And I'm prepared to say that balance is part regulation where you need it, and maybe where you don't need it you do otherwise. But I think you also have a responsibility the other way. You can't carry ideology from the Conservative Party to the point where you're saying this is just a one-stamp approach to the whole issue.

We know, boy, there's going to be some success stories in Hamilton and in Windsor and in Sarnia and a few other communities that will probably do well with this, and forget that there are literally hundreds of communities in this province who are going to be hurt by this decision over the longer run. I'll tell you what's going to end up happening—and you know it as well as I do—you're going to end up with, in some communities, a very high level of service where you're going to have a good fleet of buses servicing those communities. You're going to have probably a well-maintained system of buses in some of those communities as well, because some of those companies are going to try to do a good job; not all. If you take regulation off, I would argue, safety will probably become an issue at one point.

On the other hand, in communities where there isn't the market you're going to have Billy Joe's Taxi Service running up and down the highways of northern and rural Ontario transporting people in a minivan or transporting people in a station wagon. It will be the best service that you can expect from your bus carrier.

That's what the Minister of Transportation said the day that he delivered his statement in this House in regard to this legislation. I remember full well what he said. Go back and look at Hansard. He said, "This will allow the private entrepreneur to come in and to put minivans where it's necessary to transport people along the highways." I yelled back across the House and I said, "What about station wagons?" The minister said, "Them too."

I don't know about you, but I expect that if I'm an Ontarian living in northern Ontario I get the same level of service to a certain extent that my counterparts do in southern Ontario.

You may wonder, as southern members here in this Legislature, why we from the north are always adamantly trying to defend the constituents of northern Ontario. It's because there is a mindset here in this House, there is a mindset within your government, that the approaches of southern Ontario, when it comes to dealing with economic issues, are well applied in places like northern and rural Ontario. I tell you, they're not.

Northern Ontario has done well economically where governments have taken a good lead role.

Dans des communautés comme Kapuskasing, Timmins et Hearst, toute la question d'économie, de développement économique était faite de manière très positive. Pourquoi ? Pour beaucoup de raisons. C'est parce que le gouvernement provincial de la journée, le gouvernement conservateur, le gouvernement libéral avec M. Peterson et grandement le gouvernement NPD avec M. Rae, dans le nord de l'Ontario a joué un rôle très important et a pris sa responsabilité en disant : «Il ne faut pas seulement laisser le secteur privé tout faire, sans aucun regard pour le restant de la province. Le gouvernement lui aussi a un rôle très important à jouer.

C'est ça, le problème ; c'est ça qui me trouble de manière très profonde. Le gouvernement dit avec ce projet de loi, comme avec les autres, «Nous, gouvernement conservateur, avons une approche qui va très bien marcher dans le sud de l'Ontario, qui va très bien marcher dans certaines places dans le sud» — je dirais que dans beaucoup de cantons à travers l'Ontario hors Toronto ça ne va pas marcher — «et on va appliquer cette loi partout en Ontario et tout va bien aller.»

Vous savez que ce n'est pas le cas. On a besoin de prendre notre responsabilité dans cette assemblée. Comme législateurs, on a besoin d'aller au ministre des Transports pour lui dire simplement : «Dans cette instance, vous avez tort. Vous n'avez pas pris une approche à trouver des solutions au transport d'autobus en Ontario, et on veut que vous regardiez votre législation pour voir où ça fait du bon sens, dans la Révolution du bon sens, de trouver des solutions pour le secteur privé de jouer un plus grand rôle dans les communautés comme Toronto et d'autres grosses communautés, puis ici dans l'est de l'Ontario ou dans le nord, qu'on peut jouer un rôle plus important comme gouvernement et que ça veut dire qu'on a besoin d'avoir des réglementations. Ça veut dire très

simplement que le seul système de transport d'autobus dans le nord-est de l'Ontario, c'est l'ONR.

Si vous ne le faites pas, le marché n'est pas assez grand, comme vous le savez bien. Je suis sûr que vous lisez chaque journée le Timmins Daily Press et chaque semaine the Enterprise et la Boîte à Nouvelles d'Iroquois Falls. Je suis convaincu, parce que je vous ai vu lire ici à la chambre, que si on se trouve dans une situation où on alloue la compétition complète à ces marchés-là, il n'y aura pas assez de clients pour soutenir toutes les compagnies privées qu'il y a dans ce secteur-là. Ça ne va pas marcher. Quoi qu'il va arriver, c'est que dans toutes les communautés du nord de l'Ontario, ils vont se faire effacer d'une manière très négative.

The other concern I have is what this means to the ONTC. I had the opportunity to meet with the mayors of northeastern Ontario and an organization called the Northeastern Ontario Municipal Association at the Timmins underground gold mine tour about two weeks ago. NEOMA consists of all the mayors, from the Highway 11 corridor, from Matheson all the way up to Hearst and into Timmins. All the mayors were there, and one of the presentations we got was on the question of what was happening with the ONR and the ONTC, Air Ontario etc. One of the things that people had not stopped to think about until I mentioned it was that you as a government have said you've reduced the operating subsidy of ONTC by \$10 million, I believe, this year. I'm pretty sure I've got the number right.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Two years.

Mr Bisson: Over two years; it's \$5 million per year, \$10 million over two years. Okay, I've got it.

That has resulted in the shutdown of norOntair. I'll come back to that later. I hope you haven't thought about this, because if you have, I'm a little bit concerned: If you allow deregulation, you've got the ONTC that is losing, over two years, \$10 million of its subsidy, with more subsidies to go further down the road. That means the ONTC will have to rely even more on the commercial operations of the ONTC, which is the bus services, the communications system, the ferry system they have—I think that's a subsidized one, actually. They have to be able to rely more and more on the system of the commercial arms of their organization.

If you allow deregulation to happen, I will predict in this House today that the ONTC will cease and desist within five to six years. It will no longer operate in northeastern Ontario. Why? Because you will take away one of the abilities the ONTC has to make a buck so that it can provide services to people in northeastern Ontario and other areas that are very important. If it weren't for the ONTC, many of the services that we presently have in northeastern Ontario would not exist at all.

I think the Conservative government of Bill Davis, back in the 1970s, put norOntair in place, if I'm correct. Why did they do that? Because Bill Davis that day, along with I think Leo Bernier, the minister, said, "Quite frankly, the private sector is not filling the void of transportation in northeastern Ontario." If you lived in communities like Hearst back then, Kapuskasing, Chapleau, Foleyet, Wawa, White River, Dubreuilville, Elliot Lake, Manitoulin, Gore Bay, you didn't get services at all or you got substandard services. The govern-

ment of the day realized they had to play a lead role to be able to provide those services.

It meant that the government gave a direct operating grant to ONTC to run norOntair, and norOntair came and was put in place and ended up, over a period from mid-1970s until recently, providing air service especially for those people in northeastern Ontario and some routes up in the northwest to Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. What happened then was that the government, in moving forward with its ideology of privatization and lack of government control—that the private sector can do it best—basically said to norOntair, “That’s it; we’re cutting your subsidy,” they said to the ONTC. This was very smart politically. I’ll tell you, the government on this one—I don’t think they thought of this, but politically it was smart. You cut the subsidy to the ONTC and then you make the board of directors make the decision about what they’re going to do, knowing fully well that the decision would be to close down norOntair, and the government would try to stand back and say: “We wash our hands. It wasn’t our decision, it was the board.”

1730

Today I asked the question—it wasn’t myself, it was the member for Sudbury East who asked the question—on the ONTC to the minister, and the minister yet again today stands in this House and says: “Oh, it’s the ONTC. There’s a board that does that. I don’t know.” I’m telling you, I’ve got a bit of a problem with a Minister of Northern Development and Mines who doesn’t know what the ONTC is doing and doesn’t understand what those agencies are all about, because I can tell you, in our government our ministers bloody well understood what those agencies were all about and we played a very strong role. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the member for Sudbury East, Shelley Martel, I can tell you, at any period of the day knew exactly what was going on at the ONTC; she knew what was happening at the heritage board; she knew what was happening within OPAP and various programs of the ministry.

That troubles me, because what this government did with norOntair, they just said: “Pull the funding. We’ll let the board make a decision. Boom. norOntair is gone, and by the time people figure out what hit them, it’ll be a dead issue.” Well, it wasn’t a dead issue. People in northeastern Ontario, I tell you, are not forgetting what you guys have done there. I was amazed; it was unbelievable. I sent a householder out, like all other members do in this assembly—we’re entitled to send a piece of mail to every person who lives in our riding as far as their household—and on it was nothing about norOntair. On it was basically: “Do you agree with the tax cut scheme that this government has? Do you want a tax cut or do you want to protect services?” I am amazed, first of all, at the volume of mail that has come back on that response. On that one alone I got over 2,000 pieces back, and they’re still coming in.

But you know what’s more interesting? NorOntair wasn’t even mentioned on that piece of literature that went out, and I would dare to guess that 10% to 15%, and maybe even as high as 20%, of respondents wrote on the leaflet themselves they were mad because the government had cancelled norOntair, because people in northeastern Ontario understood, in communities like

Cochrane, they understood in Kapuskasing, as they did in Timmins, that norOntair was a vital link of transportation in northeastern Ontario. Now we see—what are they doing? They’re moving from air services and saying, “We don’t need that any more; we’ll let the private sector do that,” all done, and they’re moving over to bus deregulation.

What will happen to bus deregulation is the same thing as is happening with what you’ve done with the airlines. I can say this in the House because I have immunity in this House. I will guarantee—

Mr Michael Brown: Say it outside.

Mr Bisson: No, I’m not going to say it outside. I don’t want to get sued. I will say unequivocally that within about a year to a year and a half, I will bring you all on a tour of northeastern Ontario to communities that had air services withdrawn from norOntair that are now being serviced by private sector air carriers, and a year and a half from now, they will have nothing, many communities.

Ms Martel: Not even that long.

Mr Bisson: One of the members here says not even that long, and she’s right. I think it’s probably going to happen by this summer or this fall, because it’s been tried before. You know, how many times—I say again, we need to learn by the history. There is not the market in some of those communities to be able to develop a system of private sector transportation that is totally run on its own. There are just not enough people. How do you tell the people of Gore Bay, how do you tell the people of Elliot Lake—

Mr Michael Brown: How would the TTC work without subsidies?

Mr Bisson: I’m coming to that. But how do you tell the people of Gore Bay, how do you tell the people of Elliot Lake, how do you tell the people of Wawa, how do you tell the people of Chapleau, how do you tell the people of Hearst that they don’t deserve to have some form of air transportation? They’ve got it now, but I’m telling you, within a year and a half, I would predict that half of those communities that now have got private sector carriers will either be with an extremely reduced service with infrequent visits by airlines that fly, and when you radio and say, “I’ve got a passenger,” maybe they’ll drop by and pick you up, or you will have nobody at all.

What you will end up with in the bus transportation system is basically the same thing. At the beginning, the government will do what it can in order to attract private sector carriers. It is politically wise to do so, but six months, a year down the road, most of those communities will be without.

I’m going to say something to my southern Ontario friends who are here, the people living in the greater GTA and the Hamilton corridor: How would you feel as southern Ontario residents if the Mike Harris government came to you and said, “We are going to pull away from all our responsibilities of GO Transit and we as a province will no longer play a role in GO Transit and we will strictly throw that into the hands of the private sector”? In some communities, Go Transit would not operate whatsoever if you were to pull away the government role that it plays in being able to provide funding for the

purchase of equipment and repair of equipment of Go Transit. There are many communities that wouldn't have it.

That's what we find offensive in northern Ontario, and that's why I come here from the community of Timmins and I say to you, what you're trying to do here with bus deregulation is a made-in-southern-Ontario proposition that is looked at from a southern Ontario filter, that is looked at from the perspective of what it will do for Metro Toronto and Hamilton. In some cases you will have winners, but by and large, in northern Ontario and rural Ontario we are going to get it in the ear. It is as simple as that. I say to the members opposite—again, I'm trying to say it as politely as I can—please don't do this. We are going to get hurt in northern Ontario. That's the effect of what you're doing.

I'm prepared, as the member for Cochrane South, to work with you wherever possible to be able to move forward and try to find solutions to very tough problems. I recognize the government has a debt and is trying to deal with both its debt and deficit. That's what we were doing in government as well, so I understand that, but you cannot take a holus-bolus approach to solving those problems purely from a perspective of saying the private sector does it best, because you know as well as I do, yes, the private sector does it better in some cases, but not in all cases.

Imagine how you would feel if I was the government today and I was to walk into this House and say, "I'm kicking out the entire private sector when it comes to private bus transportation, because I believe that only the public sector should be providing a bus transportation system in this province." You would rail—pardon the pun—against our government if we were to do that. First of all, we wouldn't, because we're not that ideologically driven in the New Democratic Party that we would try to take a holus-bolus approach. If people learned anything with five years of government under Bob Rae, it's that we were a pragmatic government that said: "Listen, you have to govern from your principles as a social democrat, but you cannot govern strictly as a social democrat only. There are other things you need to do sometimes that may or may not fall into what your party sometimes would like to do. Within time, maybe you can do some things."

I think that's what you guys haven't learned. You come to government, you feel you've got a majority and you've listened to people and consulted prior to the election in the Common Sense Revolution, and yes, you hit on some flash points. There's no question of that. There are people who are upset about some of the issues you campaigned on, the question of welfare, the question of debt and deficit; no question, there were some people who were upset about that. But you come into this House and into government and you say: "Now we've got all the answers. We are the messiahs. We know what needs to be done. We're just going to go and do it. We recognize they are tough decisions, but it's good for you. We're going to spoon-feed all these decisions to you so that in the end Ontario is going to be a lot better."

I say that's not the case, and that's what most people find so offensive with this government. Most people in this province are fairminded. Most people are prepared to

give the government a chance. The history of governments in this country has always been the same. There's a fairly long honeymoon period with most new governments, because people try to be fairminded, but where I think the rubber hits the road with you guys is that people say, "Hey, you know, these guys don't seem to get it, they don't seem to get it that there is a democracy in this province."

People need to be listened to and you have to amend your ways according to not only the will of the people, because at times you do have to make decisions that are unpopular and the public will would want you to go differently, but you have to be able to govern from the perspective of being able to do things from a pragmatic position, and I would argue bus deregulation the way you do it is not pragmatic.

One of the other things that's interesting about this bill is that this whole bill makes the system self-financing. The whole idea is that the industry will pay for it, but why, once you've got a system, does the cost—let me do that again. The bill makes the system self-financing. The industry pays for it. That's where you're going with this, on to the deregulation, we understand. But why, once you've got a system that doesn't cost the taxpayer a cent, would you turn around and throw it all away? Why would you do that?

You're going to a self-financing system, but with the ultimate goal at the end that you want to get away from all regulation, and that's the part I really find a bit bizarre. You guys come to this place and you say you're the government of common sense. You say you want to go to a system of deregulation. What you're doing, though, in this bill is you're saying that the entire system as we know it is a system that will be self-financed, a system that will not be paid for by the public purse, a system that will be strictly paid by the fees and licences you charge the people in the transportation industry when it comes to bus services. But at the same time, where you want to go in the end is that you want to deregulate the entire thing. In other words, you're going to go through this whole change, you're going to make the entire thing self-financing, and once you've finally got it self-financing, which may not be a bad idea, you say we're going to throw it all out.

1740

Comment est-ce que ça a du bon sens ? Est-il vraiment quelque chose à faire avec la Révolution du bon sens ? Est-ce que ça fait du bon sens pour le gouvernement de l'Ontario de dire, «On va prendre la démarche, comme gouvernement, de dire qu'on a besoin de changer le système de réglementation dans le système d'autobus et le faire se financer lui-même à travers les licences et à travers les différentes méthodes de paiement qu'on a dans le système, dans le secteur privé, pour que ça ne coûte aucun cent au public, que les payeurs de taxes ne paient pas un cent. Ils vont à travers tout ce système-là pour le changer, et savez-vous ce qui va arriver enfin ? Ils vont s'en débarrasser complètement.

Je me demande pourquoi un gouvernement prend cette approche-là. Vous savez autant que moi que c'est supposément le gouvernement du bon sens. Ils ont eu une révolution, eux autres, au mois de juin l'année passée : «On va emmener un mandat. Nous autres, on connaît ça,

le bon sens. On est bien smart.» Mais ils font un changement, et après ils vont tout jeter dehors. Je vous demande, ça fait-il du bon sens ? Pour moi ça ne fait pas trop de bon sens du tout.

I don't want to take the remainder of my time. I just want to in the end make the argument one last time to members and put it as clearly as I can: Yes, you have the right to govern. Yes, you have the right to make decisions for the people of this province, and yes, you have the majority in this House. In the majority of this House, you will decide in your own way what you think you need or need not do when it comes to bus transportation in this province.

But I ask you and I beg you, quite frankly, when it comes to the system of bus transportation in the province, there is not a one-stop approach to this whole issue. You cannot go into bus deregulation from a holus-bolus approach and say, "My God, we're going to find a system of deregulation and we're going to apply it entirely across the province of Ontario, and in the end we're all going to be better served by it."

You need to recognize as government members that, yes, you represent the Conservative Party of Ontario, or should I say the Reform Party in some cases? Yes, you have an ideology. Nothing wrong with an ideology. I have one as well, and that's not a bad word. But in our ideology, you from the right and me from the left, we have to somewhere within that recognize that, yes, there are many good things with both of those ideologies.

There are many things that will work well when it comes from strictly one perspective, but in this case this is not one of them, because the province is a vast area that is not the same from one part to the other. There are differences. There are market differences that need to be recognized. I ask you and I ask the members again, please don't impose this on northern Ontario because, quite frankly, the north and many rural communities across this province are going to be severely affected in the longer run by what happens as you deregulate it.

The other thing I would say to you is a question of the ONTC. I'm proud as a northerner to know that there is an organization called Ontario Northland. It is a crown-owned corporation that is owned by the taxpayers of this province, and the board of that organization and the staff of that organization have worked extremely well over the years as conscientious employees and as a responsible board to be able to provide a system of transportation in northern Ontario that has served us well.

Would we like to have more? Of course we would. But the reality is that it's done a fairly good job, given its mandate and given the resources it has. And have the taxpayers of Ontario subsidized it? You bet we have. I don't mind paying taxes as a northerner to an organization like that to be able to provide a system of transportation, because in the end it is not only good for people to be able to get on a bus; it's good for the private sector being able to move goods in and out of northern Ontario. The cornerstone of any good economy is a good system of transportation.

Do I have a problem with the ONR having a monopoly in northern Ontario? No, I don't, because I recognize that if you allow strict private sector competition to happen, there is not the market in many places in northern

Ontario to allow bus services to happen on their own. If you move to a private sector system strictly, at the end we will have a two-tiered system of bus transportation in this province. If you live in an area where there's a large geographic concentration, a large concentration of people in the geography, they will be well serviced, and if not, you will be without.

I say again, I wonder what would happen if the Metro members of the Conservative caucus and the people living along the Hamilton corridor were to get the news from Mike Harris and his cabinet that the GO transportation system was being dismantled by this government. You would be saying what I am saying as a northerner, what Howard Hampton has said as a northern, and every other person in my caucus, the NDP, who gets up, that you will get nothing but a hue and cry from northern Ontario as you go through that, such as you would if you dismantled the GO transportation system, because on its own it can't do it.

With that, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for my participation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Ms Martel: I would like to congratulate my two colleagues who spoke on this issue this afternoon. I want to point out that for most of the debate the Minister of Transportation was here, and we do appreciate that fact. Let me follow up on two of the very important points that were made by my colleagues this afternoon.

First, no matter how you want to frame it, not matter how you want to cut it, this Conservative government has got to realize that when you enter into bus deregulation, you do that at a cost to the service that we now have in many, many northern Ontario communities and communities in rural Ontario. You can't get away from that; that is what the consequence is going to be. That is exactly the experience that we saw in the US. Let me just follow up a little bit with respect to that experience.

There is a professor by the name of Paul Dempsey who is at the University of Denver law school and he himself is internationally recognized as an expert when it comes to transportation law. He wrote a very important article entitled Canadian Transportation Liberalization. In that article he drew on the experience in the US, and that experience was the following. Four years after bus deregulation in the United States, there were over 4,000 communities which lost bus service, and of those 4,000 communities, only 342 could be categorized as small, remote or rural. The fact of the matter is, small communities, remote, rural communities did lose, but a whole bunch of other communities lost their bus service as well.

Second, both Greyhound and Trailways, the two major US operators, went into receivership and/or collapsed. You had two major national transportation agencies or bus services that also collapsed as a result of all of that competition. Many, many communities lost their service. There was no positive impact on the two national carriers, and this government ought to recognize—

The Acting Speaker: Your time has expired. Any further questions or comments?

Mr Michael Brown: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the speech of my friend the member for Cochrane South, and I just have a few questions. He's

brought a very northern perspective to this situation. I know that in northeastern Ontario anyway the ONTC operates the bus service that is used by many communities and that its services will be impacted and the general operation of ONTC will be impacted by what this bill does. He made a very good point when he talked about the commercial revenues of ONTC subsidizing, if you will, some of the other operations that are very important, such as the Chi-Cheemaun service between Tobermory and my constituency.

I'm seeing a pattern here. I don't think I'm being unduly paranoid, but it seems to me the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is seeing the world in a way that says: "We, as the government, have no responsibility. It's all the ONTC's fault. If something happens, it's the ONTC."

Well, the poor ONTC has lost \$10 million that used to be placed into that corporation to provide services for northerners, services like air service. The minister directed them, in a statement on November 29, to get rid of norOntair, and then has the gall to come along and say, "It was the ONTC that did that, not me," when of course in black and white it is clearly explained that the minister was the one who eliminated norOntair.

I'm seeing the same thing with bus service. It is the same thing; it's somebody else's fault. Blame it on them. You want to blame it on the municipalities, you want to blame it on the school boards, blame it on the ONTC.

1750

Mr Beaubien: I would like to reply to some of the comments some of the opposition have made this afternoon.

I would like to also point out that we are, as a government, concerned about the economic viability of rural communities. I listened to the member for Rainy River and the member for Renfrew North list a long list of communities in northern Ontario. I wonder how many of these communities have bus service now and how many of those communities had bus services five years ago.

I look at my own community whereby we do not have a bus service. I also look at an alliance called Lambton Alliance whereby it is in an alliance of senior citizens who look after providing the services that the people need. We can play on emotions here, if we so wish. However, I ask the opposition, when the bus drives from Hearst to Cochrane, does the bus drop the patient, whether that patient has cancer or whether that patient's an elderly person, to the hospital or to the service that the person needs? The answer is no, it does not. Consequently, our own community has looked after its own needs and it services the area very well.

Furthermore, what is wrong with having a private individual provide a service with a 12-passenger van like is provided in many municipalities? I think this province was built on the will of the private sector. I think an awful lot of government agencies destroyed the fabric of this province.

I look at the inheritance we received from the previous government, \$100 billion. If you feel that's the way we should conduct business in this province, I would strongly suggest that it does not make sense, and what future are you going to leave for your kids?

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak briefly to the comments that were made. There is this perception offered up by the opposition parties that by regulatory intervention by governments, somehow this is a process that's free. There's no cost attached to it.

The difficulty is, there is a cost. Forcing operators to stop at unprofitable locations—I'm not saying that that needs to be serviced—drives up the cost of operating a facility or operating a bus line, operating an airline etc. There is an opportunity in that for some operators to lose money, go out of business. These are the kinds of things that happen in very regulated industries. Very regulated industries at the end of the day aren't really being serviced free or at no cost, or if they're trying to recover their cost, it's so excessive that they don't become accessible to quite a few people who want to use it.

Having said that, the arguments can be put forward—and I heard the member for Rainy River speak about the airline industry and other industries that were involved in regulatory change. To be quite frank, if there weren't changes in the airline industry when they were making those changes, it was doomed. It was literally doomed for the costs and the amounts of money the airlines were losing. They were losing a ton of money and they couldn't go on year after year after year continuing to lose money. In effect, if they did, the only participant that would have been left would have been the government to subsidize heavily industry upon industry.

I agree there are some concerns across the floor. But to leave the impression that by regulating it's a panacea, by regulating you've come to this Shangri-La, you're kidding yourself, because the costs are excessive, some businesses end up not being able to operate and at the end of the day you need a heavy commitment from government funds to maintain levels of service that otherwise couldn't be maintained.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane South, you have two minutes.

Mr Bisson: I really tried through the last 20 or 30 minutes that I had to try to approach this in a non-partisan way. I really, really tried. I tried to say to the members, listen, there are some real concerns in northern Ontario, but I reject categorically what the member from Etobicoke has said and the member for Lambton has said because what they're saying is, the government doesn't have a role and responsibility, and I tell you they do. And does it cost money? You bet it does, but that's why we pay taxes. Yes, people want value for money. Yes, people want to make sure that it's accountable. Yes, people want to make sure there's a good bang for the buck. But for you to stand in this House and to say that if it doesn't make a buck, it shouldn't be there—

Mr Stockwell: I never said that.

Mr Bisson: Quite frankly, that's what you said, Mr Stockwell. What it means to say is, communities in Hearst, communities in Cochrane, communities in Matheson are going to be without services altogether, and I reject that.

Mr Stockwell: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to say very clearly that that's not at all what I said. If the

member wants to correct his own record, he can, but I would ask him not to interpret mine.

Mr Bisson: The point is that it's an ideological decision you're making. You're saying that subsidies are wrong. You're saying the government should not be in the business of offering subsidies or regulating because it costs the taxpayers a buck, that the private sector can do it better, so let them do it because they know how to do it best. That, my friend, is an ideological approach that is not going to work.

The reality is that this whole country, the entire country, has been developed over a period of years by the federal and provincial governments playing a very strong role when it comes to transportation. For this Conservative government to say here today that you're going to turn the clock of history back and undo what's happened in the transportation system in this country from 1867 to 1996, that everything done in the past was wrong and you're right, I say you're only kidding yourselves and the voters will realize that in three years' time.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): As my colleague Transportation Minister Al Palladini mentioned earlier, this government is committed to breaking down the barriers to economic growth and investment. In the Ontario government's economic statement last November, we promised to begin the red-tape review to tackle the restrictions on private sector ingenuity. Government has no business telling business what to do, and government has no business telling bus companies how to operate. That's why this government is removing economic restrictions on Ontario's intercity bus industry.

The intercity bus industry has been regulated since the 1920s. At that time the regulation was necessary, particularly during the Depression years, to help stabilize the industry and ensure an adequate level of service. Bus companies had exclusive rights to operate scheduled and charter routes in a particular area on the understanding that they would subsidize the more costly rural routes with the profits from the larger routes. Seventy years ago, regulation may have made sense. At that time it made sense to limit the number of companies allowed to offer bus service and to protect them from larger monopolies and harmful competition. Back then, the point was to give the industry some stability during its infancy stage. Now, however, the rationale no longer applies, and I'd like to take a few minutes to explain why.

At one time, regulations helped prevent large bus companies from discriminating against rural customers. They also prevented larger companies from having a monopoly on the market, thereby driving smaller companies out of business. Today, however, those same regulations frustrate new companies trying to set up competing services and they limit competition among existing companies.

The practice of using high-volume routes to subsidize low-volume routes may have been useful in the past. However, today people in the industry admit this doesn't occur as much as it once did. Most of them realize that

the bus business must be self-sufficient and this has led to a gradual decline in services across Ontario.

Another reason we must remove restrictions on the intercity bus industry is to put pressure on bus companies to cut their overhead costs and run more efficiently. Private sector companies must be lean and resourceful, and so should the intercity bus industry. With deregulation, we could see more companies forming alliances and setting up services like the airlines have; that is, a hub and spoke system where local bus companies feed passengers to a larger company in a central location that will take them on the next leg of the trip. Smart businesses will investigate these kinds of opportunities in the market and determine where gaps exist. That way, they can create a successful business and meet the public's service needs.

There are other problems associated with regulating the bus industry. Regulations prevent bus companies from responding to evolving markets. Bureaucratic red tape and administrative delays discourage new and existing companies from meeting new travel needs. An industry without these barriers will be more flexible and quick to respond to calls for services like more accessible buses and expanded services on high-volume routes.

The industry as it is today also lacks innovation. Government must step away and give entrepreneurs a chance to step in with creative ideas. Without restrictions, the private sector can easily set up new services: specialized services and services that cater to a particular market niche.

Of course, in these times of fiscal constraint we must also consider the cost of regulation to taxpayers. Government currently operates the Ontario Highway Transport Board, which is responsible for granting companies a licence to operate. Less regulation will reduce government costs and put more money in the taxpayers' pockets.

Finally, deregulation could also have some important benefits—spinoffs on other parts of the economy. For instance, bus manufacturers may start getting more orders for new buses. Lower prices and better services undoubtedly will attract more customers. Plus, more bus routes that integrate with other transportation and business services could spring up. All of these could benefit the tourism sector.

I'd like to turn to another issue. Some people have expressed concerns about deregulation. Recently, a group called the Freedom to Move Coalition spoke out. I would like to take a moment to address some of these concerns.

First of all, I'd like to get back to something I mentioned briefly at the outset; that is, that this government is committed to eliminating red tape and reducing regulatory burden on private sector companies. If we continue to impose economic regulations on the intercity bus industry, we are creating barriers to job creation, economic growth and investment in this province.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 avril 1996

*The House met at 1005.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS, 1996

CHARTRE DES DROITS DES PATIENTS DE 1996

Mrs Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario / Projet de loi 41, Loi visant à protéger les droits des personnes qui reçoivent des services de santé en Ontario.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I'm pleased to rise this morning during private members' hour to speak to a bill which is entitled An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario. I'm very proud to present this bill to the Legislature. I don't have time during this debate to read it in its entirety, but I would like to set out some of the provisions which I hope will be supported by all members.

The bill sets out the rights of individuals who are receiving health care. It also speaks to their responsibilities, the responsibilities of both those who receive as well as those who provide health care services in the province.

The purposes of the act, primarily, are:

"1. To ensure that persons receiving health services in Ontario are aware of their right to receive appropriate and timely care.

"2. To ensure that persons receiving health services in Ontario are treated with dignity and respect by those who provide the services.

"3. To promote and improve communication between persons who receive health services in Ontario and the health professionals who provide the services...."

My view is that this legislation will promote minimizing the number of violations, as set out in section 3 of this bill, as well as minimize the number of complaints relating to the violations that could potentially be made to the colleges and boards of directors of health professions under the regulated health professions legislation.

How do I think it will achieve that? It will improve and foster communications because for the first time in legislation this bill would promote and foster an alternative dispute mechanism called communication. It would say to the colleges, "As part of your investigations of a complaint, you have to see if the patient and the provider have sat down and talked to each other about the concerns they have." We know that very often that kind of communication can clear up all kinds of misunderstandings. Never before have we seen the proposal in health legislation to foster that kind of communication, to foster

alternative dispute resolution, and this bill is important because it sets that in motion.

It leaves investigation and discipline on all matters to the colleges, but it sets out very clearly for the colleges what, in the view of this Legislature, would be considered professional misconduct. I have always believed it is the responsibility of the province and of the Legislature to be clear, and this bill clarifies it.

For anyone who's interested, truly there is nothing new in this bill. Every provision of the bill appears somewhere in legislation applying to someone in the province. In the Nursing Homes Act there is a bill of rights. There are provisions in the Mental Health Act that very clearly give people their right to be informed on issues of incompetency and right to appeal. The new Health Care Consent Act has an information section.

What this bill does for the first time is bring all of those different rights together in one place. I believe this act will provide an important public education opportunity. It will also serve to not only inform individuals but raise the level of awareness among providers.

Is this new? Is this the first jurisdiction in North America to have a health care bill of rights? The answer is no. I wish I could say that it was landmark legislation, but in fact Massachusetts has a health care bill of rights.

What does a bill of rights do? We know from the days of John Diefenbaker and the Conservative government in Ottawa that a bill of rights brought forward is a statement of our values and our principles, and it enshrines those in law. It is something we have always seen as a positive step forward.

I do not believe that enforcement legislation is the way to go to try to solve all the problems of society. That's why the enforcement mechanism I have chosen in this legislation is left entirely with the colleges to determine what their protocols and procedures are. However, the legislation is very clear. It will assist in education and communication, and in my view it will not only benefit the individuals who are receiving health care, it will also benefit the providers—the doctors, the nurses and those under the Regulated Health Professions Act.

I am proud of the fact that so many individuals and organizations have sent me letters of support for this bill.

The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association says: "We also support your efforts surrounding a patients' bill of rights. These are very important efforts considering the present government's view on provincial advocacy legislation."

The Ontario Medical Association would like to see this bill go to committee so that it could be discussed and potentially amended, and I would support that process and support potential amendments. The Ontario Medical Association says, "There is much in this act to be recom-

mended and, in at least one area, this act recognizes a principle long overdue in our system."

From the Alzheimer Association of Ontario: "In its intent to protect the dignity and rights of people receiving health services, it is very much in accord with the policy positions our board has taken."

From the Ontario Physiotherapy Association: "Please be assured of our support of your private member's bill (An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario). If there is any specific initiative the Ontario Physiotherapy Association can undertake to support the bill you need only advise us."

It is my hope that as people understand what is in this bill, they will recognize there is nothing to fear. It's my hope that it will be supported by the government. It has been supported by many who have taken the opportunity to read it, to understand it and to know what its intent is. What is surprising to me is that I have yet to find anyone whom I've discussed this bill with who is not in support of both the principle and intent and the mechanism I have chosen.

There is one other new feature to this piece of legislation that I think is important and should be noted: This will be the first time in legislation where the words "appropriate care" become enshrined. The Canada Health Act has five principles that are enshrined in that legislation: universality, comprehensiveness, public administration, portability and reasonable access. The Canada Health Act also speaks to medical necessity.

From the days of the development of the Canada Health Act, we all know that health services are now delivered in ways that were never contemplated when the doctor used to arrive at your door for a house call with his little black bag. Today there are many new technologies and many procedures that were not even dreamt of. Who would have ever imagined transplants? Who would have ever imagined the kind of extensive diagnostic therapies such as MRIs and the kinds of scanners that have become commonplace in our society?

One of the things we know as new technologies and new therapies have developed is the assurance that people actually get the care they really need. The idea has gone beyond simply the notion of medical necessity, which everyone agrees should be the basis for the delivery of services under Canadian medicare, but there is also a growing consensus, and I would go so far as to say there is a consensus, that what people should receive from Canadian medicare is appropriate care, that what the obligation of Ontario health care should be to the people of the province is not only improvement in their health status but the assurance that they are receiving what they need. What they need is appropriate care.

I don't think there is anyone who would think you should have a right to anything which is inappropriate, so that deals with the issues of rights and responsibilities, of making sure we do everything we can to let people know that we want them to have what they really need, when they need it. This bill is companion to and would not in any way interfere with the Canada Health Act. I see it as an enhancement of that legislation because it further clarifies the rights and the responsibilities of patients and providers.

I'm hopeful that all members of this House and this Legislature will see the value and the merits of this bill. Frankly, it is something I have wanted to introduce for quite some time and actually began thinking about and talking about when I was Minister of Health in the province of Ontario. I believe we can do a lot as private members, and one of the things we can do is bring forward our ideas to this House in a non-partisan fashion, ask for the support of members of the Legislature, allow bills to go to committee so we can explore some of these ideas and see whether they have merit and should be enshrined in legislation.

The last thing I would like to say is that this bill will not cost the government anything. This is not a money bill. What it will do, I believe, is help them in their rightful role of increasing awareness of the public of what they can rightfully expect, what their rights are and what is an unreasonable expectation. It should also give comfort to the professions that I believe in self-governance, that I believe in good quality health care for the people of the province.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I am pleased to be here this morning to take part in this debate on the member for Oriole's private member's bill, An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario.

Despite some of the things I might be provoked to say, I want to assure the member that I come here not to bury the bill but to praise it, that it is something the government should support. When I was reading the bill, I was trying to think if there were any openings here for the government to vote against it, and I couldn't think of any reason they'd vote against it. I see members on the government side all nodding their heads affirmatively that they certainly intend to support this bill. I don't know how they could possibly refuse to support the bill.

What is so terribly important about this bill is that it is necessary particularly because the government, through Bill 19, repealed the Advocacy Act. Now I have to tell you that I expected the government to repeal the Advocacy Act because the Advocacy Act did something for vulnerable people in our society. The Advocacy Act spoke on behalf of vulnerable people, so I expected the Tories to repeal it, just the way they've attacked welfare recipients, just the way they're going after seniors, just the way they're going after the disabled. I expected the Tories to repeal the Advocacy Act.

What I didn't expect was that the Liberals would support them in repealing the Advocacy Act. So of course Mrs Caplan, the member for Oriole, has no choice. She has to now protect her flank, if you will, by bringing forth a bill that says, "We're sorry we voted for the Tories in repealing the Advocacy Act." That's what this little piece of legislation is all about.

I come here to praise the bill, not to bury it, but you have to understand what the Liberals are all about. They voted for repeal of the Advocacy Act, which protected the vulnerable, so now of course they have to bring forth something that says: "We're sorry. It was a moment we regret and therefore we have to do something about protecting ourselves because we'll be criticized by vulnerable people."

During the committee hearings on Bill 19, which repealed the Advocacy Act, there were many witnesses, and our party, the New Democrats, tried to move some amendments. The government voted against those amendments; for example, the right to advisers when people were deemed to be incapable by the medical profession. So now there's no obligation by a health professional to tell a patient that they've been found incapable, what their rights are and that they can appeal that decision. Surely that's just a fundamental right for the most vulnerable people. During those hearings, witness after witness came forward and explained to the committee why the provision of advice for people in this kind of situation was so essential, keeping in mind that they are so vulnerable.

1020

The whole question of the government's position on advocacy, as I said, was understandable, but we proposed another amendment that would have established a non-profit corporation that would have ensured that people were told of the significance of the finding of incapacity and the right to appeal. The government voted that amendment down as well. At every turn, when we tried to move to ameliorate the very tough ramifications of the repeal of the Advocacy Act, the government wouldn't even compromise and say: "Well, all right, maybe we're going too far by a full repeal of the act. Perhaps we should accept some of these amendments." No, no, that was not in the cards.

The same with the right to find an interpreter. What if language is a problem when a doctor is deciding that someone is incompetent? We moved an amendment on that, because that could be a serious problem. I would think most members would understand that. The government voted against that amendment. There's no reference in Mrs Caplan's bill to interpreters, helping find interpreters when someone is deemed incapable. I regret that.

There's also a section in this bill which I support, because I come here to praise this bill, the whole issue of reasonable and timely access to medical care. There is a danger out there, with all the government cuts in health care, despite their sanctimonious declarations before and during the election that there'd be no cuts to health care. Of course, that has proven to be the equivalent of the federal Liberals' promise to eliminate the GST, and you saw somebody thrown out of the House of Commons yesterday because they accused the Prime Minister of lying about the elimination of the GST.

I have no intention of getting thrown out of this assembly by accusing this government of lying when they promised that they wouldn't cut health care. I don't think I have to make that argument; others will make it for me. As a matter of fact, the numbers will make that argument for me and already are doing so, because of the cuts that are there now.

I don't think there's even much of a debate going on in the province now. If you ask people in the province of Ontario about timely and appropriate access to health care, they've expressed real concern, because they know there have been substantial cuts to the health care system, as announced by the minister; not announced by me or by

the official opposition but announced by the Minister of Health himself and by the Minister of Finance.

There's no question in people's minds about there being cuts in health care in Ontario, absolutely no question about that at all. It's only that the government members are in what's called "a state of denial" that there's been any kind of debate on that. Ask anybody out there about health care in the province and people express grave concern and will make the point that of course the government's cutting health care. They've already announced it, making massive cuts in the hospital system and not replacing those cuts in the community-based and home care programs.

The fact is that it's appropriate to put into legislation that there be reasonable and timely access to health care because it is under threat. If government members are anxious about committing themselves to something they can't live with later, that's the part of this bill I'd be worried about if I were a government member, because of reasonable and timely access to health care. If the cuts continue, there won't be reasonable and timely access to health care in this province. That's the one aspect, if I were a Tory backbencher, I'd be a little nervous about.

I must reiterate I regret most profoundly that the Liberals saw fit to support the Tories in the repeal of the Advocacy Act, the bill that protected the most vulnerable people in our society, yet the government repealed that act and didn't put anything in its place. This is a faint-hearted attempt by the Liberals to say to people in the province, "We really do regret voting for repeal of the Advocacy Act, but here's something that will be a sop to you, and we hope that you will appreciate what we're doing."

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): A sop?

Mr Laughren: Yes, a sop by the Liberals.

However, I come here to praise this bill, not to bury it, so I must say I am pleased to stand in my place and support it. I can't imagine anyone in the assembly voting against this bill that's been brought forward by the member for Oriole. I congratulate her for bringing it forward and I certainly intend to support it.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the legislation introduced by my colleague the member for Oriole. Health care is a very important issue for this government. Mr Laughren would have you believe that we're cutting and that we're not involved in putting money back into health care and making health care in Ontario the important item that we all believe it is.

As you know, we have guaranteed that the budget in health care will be maintained at \$17.4 billion over the course of our mandate. While the status quo is not acceptable, we will find savings and we will reinvest them in areas that Ontario has told us they want us to reinvest them in, not government priorities, but the people of Ontario's health priorities. We also want to ensure that consumers are getting the highest-quality health care at the best possible price.

While the government supports many of the principles expressed in Bill 41, we have some serious concerns with some aspects of this bill. We strongly support the underlying principles of the Canada Health Act and are

dedicated to ensuring that each Ontario resident receives access to medically necessary services.

As well, we believe that Ontario citizens fund the health care system through their tax dollars, and because of the essential nature of health care services, consumers of the system deserve to understand fully the choices of services available to them and to take an active role in making decisions regarding their health care.

The Premier is on record as stating that every Ontario citizen has specific rights pertaining to receiving health services in Ontario. Some of these include but are not limited to the right to be informed about treatment options, the right to participate in decision-making and the right to treatment free of discrimination which recognizes one's privacy, dignity and individuality. Our goal is to empower consumers of the health care system with the rights to proper care and to participate in decisions regarding that care.

We strongly believe that the principles of the Canada Health Act are dedicated to ensuring that each Ontarian receives access to medically necessary services. It was to that end that we increased out-of-country OHIP coverage within weeks of taking office.

1030

The Premier, the Minister of Health and all of us in the government recognized the importance of ensuring that people have the right to be informed of treatment options and to participate in the decisions made about the treatment. The Health Care Consent Act recognizes the principles when people are capable, but also goes further to allow other people to make decisions for their loved ones when they are not capable.

It is one of the reasons that we moved quickly as a government to amend the Consent to Treatment Act. We heard Mr Laughren talking about that this morning. Several people came before the committee and told us about the negative impact it had on patient care when they had to read the scripted message informing the patients about their rights when they were incapable. In many cases, it made difficult situations worse.

As the members know, the Legislature recently passed the Health Care Consent Act, which restores the balance between the patient, the family and the practitioner. It requires that health practitioners ensure that a person is provided with information about the consequences of the finding that he or she is incapable to decide about treatment in accordance with the guidelines established by the practitioners' governing body. This amendment was passed in committee and was in fact a compromise position that was supported by the Liberals, so I am not really clear why the member raises this issue again in paragraph 9 of section 3 of her bill.

I am pleased to report to the House that we have already received guidelines from several of the colleges and that the others are required to submit theirs in the very near future. These guidelines will be reviewed in accordance with the intent of the Health Care Consent Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act to protect the public interest.

The member across the floor also makes an attempt in this bill to protect the privacy of health records. However, as she is aware, and as all of us are aware on the floor of

the House, we have made a commitment to work with the Information and Privacy Commissioner to develop a comprehensive piece of legislation that will be much stronger in its ability to protect the confidentiality of patient information. I think we all recognize that two sentences in a bill such as this are not sufficient to protect the information and the rights of the people of Ontario.

I would like the members of this House today to know that Mrs Caplan was one of the major architects of the RHPA, an excellent statute, a bill she is very proud of and rightfully so, a bill which called on colleges to protect the public interest and which we as a government strongly support. The members will also know that under the RHPA, the colleges currently have professional misconduct regulations which stipulate that it is an act of professional misconduct for a health professional not to respect the dignity of patients in a variety of ways.

Mrs Caplan's bill has a significant impact on these colleges in the province. My staff have spoken to members of the colleges and they are very concerned about this legislation. They are most concerned about the duplication and, in some cases, the conflict between her proposals and the existing mandate of the RHPA. I would like to quote from the letter I received from the College of Chiropractors of Ontario. This is addressed to me and it says:

"The bill only recently came to the attention of the college and we have not had sufficient opportunity to consider all of its implications, although we would of course support many of the general principles. Our initial review causes us serious concern about possible duplication and redundancy with the professional misconduct regulations under the provisions of specific acts as well as the Health Care Consent Act. There also appears to be some conflict with the current process relating to complaints and discipline established by the RHPA."

I also heard from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and they suggested that the bill creates a new mandatory procedure for processing complaints of professional misconduct under the bill. These new rules are not consistent with procedures set out in the Regulated Health Professions Act. Colleges will not know which complaints procedure is supposed to be used. They have many more comments and I'll make those available to Mrs Caplan after this talk. Perhaps the member, during her final wrapup, will inform the House about which colleges she has met with and discussed these implications with and what implications they will have to the professions that they're regulating.

As I mentioned earlier, we are committed to ensuring that the health care budget is maintained at \$17.4 billion over the course of our mandate. We are also ensuring that services are maintained or enhanced in our local communities and we have made a number of announcements to that effect.

Mr Laughren, I think that you need to know and to listen carefully that we have made reinvestments in the community. We have provided \$170 million to expand community-based long-term-care services.

Mr Laughren: Don't lecture me.

Mrs Johns: You're not listening. Maybe that's why you don't know that we've made these reinvestments; you're talking through this.

We announced \$25 million for the expansion of dialysis services. We have reduced the waiting list in cardiac surgery by increasing by 19% the number of surgeries funded in Ontario. We have announced capital dollars so that communities can move forward with their restructuring plans. We have repatriated 76 patients with acquired brain injury who are currently receiving treatment in the United States. We have announced funding to help hospitals in small and rural communities maintain emergency room coverage in the evenings and on the weekends.

The number of announcements goes on and on and on. We are working hard to find savings within the health care envelope and to reallocate them to priority areas to ensure that our system remains sustainable in the future.

I want to make it clear that we support the principles in this bill today. We firmly believe in patient rights but we also firmly believe in self-regulation of colleges. This bill, however, has significant ramifications, particularly for professional colleges, and I am not convinced that they have been sufficiently consulted. I would welcome the opportunity to have a full and open discussion with the colleges and with interested people in Ontario about this bill.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm obviously very proud to stand in support of this bill. I believe the preamble to the bill is the most important aspect of the bill, which is An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario.

Certainly bills of rights are enshrined in many different ways and in many different places. You can look at the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, which was passed by the United Nations on December 14, 1974. You can also look at the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which was passed at the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1959.

As we all know, there are 10 principles with regard to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and I thought I would read two, but now because I see the Minister of Education is in the audience today, I would allow him to listen carefully to principle 7.

First of all, let me deal with principle 4, because I believe the bill from the member for Oriole ties in very, very closely to this principle:

"The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security. He shall be entitled to grow and develop in health. To this end, special care and protection shall be provided both to him and to his mother, including adequate prenatal and postnatal care. The child shall have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services."

Principle 5 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child states:

"The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition."

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I was going to stop there with those two principles—there are 10 very interesting ones—but I thought I would read principle 7 because it is so important for our discussion over the course of the last week and in the future.

"The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages. He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture, and enable him, on a basis of equal opportunity, to develop his abilities, his individual judgement, and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society.

"The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents.

"The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right."

Let me leave that one and go to the Canadian Bill of Rights, which was passed by John Diefenbaker on August 4, 1960, and then enshrined in the Constitution in 1982 by the then Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Let me try to tie the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for Canadians to the bill of rights introduced by the member for Oriole.

If you look at the first aspect of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it guarantees rights and freedoms, which are very, very important to individuals regardless of age, sex etc, and if you look at the number one item in the bill introduced by the member for Oriole, you'll see "A person has the right to receive appropriate health care." Indeed that's a guarantee of rights and freedoms as enshrined in the Constitution through this charter.

If you look at the second item in the charter, you will see "Fundamental Freedoms," and if you look at the second aspect of the member's bill of rights, it says, "A person has the right, and the responsibility, to participate in decisions made with respect to his or her health care on an equal footing with the health professionals who provide" the health care qualities which are important.

If you look at the third aspect of the Charter of Rights, "Mobility Rights," and compare that to item 4 of the member's bill, it states, "A person has the right to reasonable and timely access to appropriate health services."

We'll go on. If you look at the provision for the rights to have legal rights to life, liberty and security, you look at item 8 and you see it is addressed in this bill. Finally, if you look at the right of equality and look at item 5 of this bill, you will see that they are consistent.

The member for Oriole is not asking for anything new. She's asking for rights which are already enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and, most important, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and I can't see how any member, regardless if they're in opposition or in government, can vote against this.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I rise also to speak briefly in support of this private member's bill from the member for Oriole. I have to confess that when I read this bill, I wondered why it needed to be in front of us, because when you look at the basic rights, they are rights you would think had been enshrined in previous legislation in one way or another. They are the kinds of basic good-sense, commonsense, whatever phrase you want to use, rights we all, I think, would expect to see that we

receive from our health care system, things like the right to receive appropriate health care, the right and responsibility to participate in decisions made with respect to the kind of care, and on and on and on.

So it is with some kind of surprise, I have to say, that I listened to the comments made by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health when she categorizes, I presume, her opposition to this bill, in part because there are significant ramifications that flow from this bill that need to be looked at. That I find a little troubling, because I would hope these are exactly the kinds of rights that we would want to make sure, in one of the basic services we have in this society, our health care system, are actually there, codified in a way that doesn't attack or doesn't seek to attack those providers of the health care system.

I think we would all agree that the vast majority of people who provide health care in this province do so in a very good way, but that has never stopped us as a society from codifying in law and in regulations and in guidelines under the various other relevant pieces of legislation that guide and oversee the different professions, from putting in law these basic premises and these basic rights and responsibilities. That really is how I see this piece of legislation.

My colleague from Nickel Belt has I think correctly pointed out some of the interesting changes in position taken by members of the Liberal caucus, but I come to this particular point in the week reminding people that it is private members' hour, and as such we ought to look very clearly, in as non-partisan a way as we can, at the resolutions and bills that come before this House during this particular time.

So I would say to the members of the government, particularly to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, that if there are some concerns about conflicts or overlaps between what's in front of us here in this bill from the member for Oriole and other pieces of legislation, that's exactly what the committee process is in existence for. I would certainly urge people to support this legislation because in principle—which is what, after all, this second reading is supposed to be about—I think it does things that we should be supportive of. It enshrines in legislation, in what would be popularly known as a patients' bill of rights, some of the basic rights we've talked about, and it also ensures there are mechanisms in place, again referring to the legislation that exists, the Health Care Consent Act, where that exists, and suggesting some new procedures where that isn't already covered by legislation that would deal with situations when there are conflicts.

One of the pieces I particularly appreciate in this bill is the very last section, which suggests there should be an informal resolution when there is any sense that rights have been violated, which I think follows the basic premise that we see in grievance processes in any kind of basic, commonsense situation where there is someone who feels their rights have been in any way violated, for them to have as the first responsibility a discussion and a resolution with the party they felt has breached those rights before proceeding with any formal complaints under the legislation.

Again, to me, this legislation is something that restates basic rights that we all should be not only in agreement with, but wondering why they aren't already there in the laws of this province. I see nothing but useful things that can come out of a piece of legislation like this. If there are issues around conflict with other pieces of legislation, those should be dealt with, but they should only be dealt with after we adopt this piece of legislation and send it to the appropriate committee, where those discussions can happen and that sorting out can take place. So I'm happy to stand in my place and support this bill.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm happy to engage in this private member's bill regarding enhancement of individual rights under the health care system. I compliment the former Minister of Health and member for Oriole for presenting it in terms of trying to gather up all these rights into an individual package.

She led the charge on the Regulated Health Professions Act, in which the various health care colleges and professions were to be the mediators, the resolvers, I suspect, of individual complaints. We've also had from the previous government the Advocacy Act, which was supposed to deal with specific problems for vulnerable people. It's interesting to note that we are here as legislators to deal with the grand principles of systems, but I have some fundamental reservations about how we think through the implementation of these principles.

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For example, the member for Oriole has in her bill the enshrinement of timely access and appropriate health care for individuals, but I don't see any specific means of remediation for people who are unhappy campers with the system, unhappy consumers, customers. We don't seem to use those words in what I call a closed-loop system, medicare. For example, we have people waiting up to two years for hip replacement. One could get into a debate as to whether the person waiting is caught under this government's handling of health care or the previous governments'. The point is that those folks aren't getting dealt with.

I have an individual constituent who wrote to me about his wife when she died of Alzheimer disease and the way in which my constituent was in a sense put through the mill. All kinds of letters have gone out. I've written; there have been responses. But when it comes to translating these grand ideas into practical outcomes, we don't seem to really get to grips with how we're going to handle that.

What kind of means is there for the individual health care consumer today to deal with an unhappy outcome? Can they sue? Presumably, but you're caught up in the courts for years. Can you measure the outcome specifically and practically in terms of what level of appropriate health care he or she received as a patient? Is there any way in which the consumer, at the end of a health care exercise, operation, whatever it happens to be, has a kind of empowerment to tell the doctors, the health care providers, "I'm really happy" or "I'm not"? There's no means of accrediting the system, the hospital board, the individual, in a sense.

We talk about all these rights and grand principles, but when it comes down to the practical basis of everyday

reality, whether you're dealing with timely access to health care or appropriate health care levels, we get into this debate of, well, these aren't being implemented because this government hasn't put the money back in, and on the other side we're supposed to be dealing with it in terms of the fact that everybody wants to be treated with sensitivity and dignity. I would like to hear from the member in terms of how we translate these things into specific, practical outcomes that realize happy health care consumers.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I am pleased to join the discussion on this particular bill. I'd like to congratulate the member for Oriole for bringing this forward to the Legislature. As has been mentioned before, it is nothing new, it's something that we already know, but it serves to crystallize the problem that is associated with both the care receiver and the caregiver.

I wouldn't be totally surprised to hear that the government members do support the principle of the bill but they cannot support it on a vote. We have seen this before, unfortunately. I say "unfortunately" because they are saying again, "We like it, but it does not solve the health problem in Ontario." This bill, as proposed, is not intended to solve all the problems associated with the health care system in Ontario. It serves to crystallize two very important points: the duties, the responsibilities, receiving health care with compassion and dignity; and trying to minimize or eliminate any wrongdoing while a professional—a physician, a doctor—is rendering his or her service.

I hear that they cannot support it because of some unforeseen measures that are not contained in this bill. The thing that is really surprising is that, as the member for Oriole said, it's not costing taxpayers any money. How can anyone vote against proposed legislation that is trying to provide good care for those in need at no cost to anyone? It is just beyond anybody's comprehension.

I'd like to compliment the member for Oriole for bringing this to the forefront because, want it or not, there are serious problems out there associated with the cuts we have seen coming from the government of the day, and I'll tell you why. We're receiving at our offices people, visits, calls of inequities and partiality, if you will, no longer vested under the umbrella of the universality system. We're moving far away from that. Unfortunately, there are too many cases coming out, almost on a daily basis, where patients or family members no longer receive the care of a particular hospital or home care because those services are no longer there.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: It is?

Mrs Johns: We reinvested \$170 million in long-term care.

Mr Sergio: I can appreciate and I accept what the member is saying. However, if it is the case that more money's being reinvested in the health care system, how come we see that the health care system in Ontario, especially for the frail, is deteriorating so fast, to the point that seniors are completely shocked when they go into a hospital to receive health care and they either feel mistreated or are not given the care they expected to

receive when they approached a hospital or another care system?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I would appreciate a little more sense of dignity in the House. I would remind the member for Huron that I asked for order.

Mr Sergio: Mr Speaker, I'm quite pleased to have the interjections by the member for Huron because this shows you and the people of Ontario the nerve that this innocuous, if you will, bill has touched. For heaven's sake, if it is not costing taxpayers any money, if it helps to provide better health care for our people, why would she be speaking against it and go along with their own members?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Unbelievable.

Mr Sergio: It is totally unbelievable; yes, indeed.

The bill provides two major components: to ensure, with dignity, health care to patients and to provide some safety net for those providing health care. I do hope that the members of this House, especially on the government side, may reconsider and support the bill.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate in support of my colleague the member for Oriole's fine bill. It is timely that the bill is before us, because I don't think there's any question in anyone's mind that in the next two to three years health care in the province will be in turmoil. There's no doubt of that. The government has cut almost 20% from hospital budgets and all of us, every one of us in our constituencies, is dealing with our hospitals, which are faced with a significant, very dramatic problem in accommodating an almost 20% cut in their budgets. That's not debatable.

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I realize the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, who's barking as usual, doesn't like to hear that, but that's the facts. You have cut almost 20% from the hospital budgets. Everybody understands that. My own local hospital, Scarborough Grace Hospital, one of the finest hospitals you'll find without question, has been cut by 5%.

So why is this bill important, Mr Speaker? I know you'll understand it. It is because as hospitals are looking at almost a 20% cut, people who are looking for this Legislature to ensure a quality health care system need some protection. There's no doubt that what the government's going to do is—it has said, "We're going to maintain health spending at \$17.4 billion," for those of you watching this. It will be a charade. They will find programs in other ministries, move them over to the health budget and say: "Well, public, we're going to fool you. We're still going to spend \$17.4 billion, but we'll simply move programs."

Mr Laughren: They have already started it.

Mr Phillips: As my colleague from Nickel Belt said, you've already started. You announced it a week and a half ago. You moved some things from Comsoc, community and social services, into the health budget. Why? One reason only: "Take the spending up in health, cut it out somewhere else, while we're maintaining spending in health."

Why do we need this bill? Because the public needs some protection as you're moving forward on your agenda. We know what your agenda is. You've got to find \$8 billion, you've got to slash budgets in order to fund the tax cut. Two weeks from today, or in two weeks, you're going to announce the tax cut. You'll all be on your feet here—believe me, guaranteed—you will be on your feet here in two weeks wildly cheering the tax cut—

Mr Baird: Hear, hear.

Mr Phillips: Well, you can start now. I appreciate that. In fact many of the public will love it, there's no question of that. But they will realize in about 12 months, 18 months or two years the price they paid for the tax cut. One of the big prices they paid is that you broke a promise, you broke a fundamental promise on health care. You have slashed health care. Why? Because you've got to find the money for the tax cut. So when people in two weeks from now say, "Thank you for that tax cut, I really appreciate it," in 12 months, 18 months, 36 months from now they will realize that it was funded through a dramatic cut in our very treasured health care system.

There we are. That is why my colleague from Oriole proposes this bill—that's one of the reasons she proposes it—to ensure that as this government proceeds, the fundamental thing we're here for, a quality health care system, is maintained and protected for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oriole has two minutes.

Mrs Caplan: I'd like to thank those members of the House who spoke in support of this bill. For those who are watching the debate and those who are here in the House, the procedures of this House allow for the tabling of a bill, second reading, debate in principle, the bill can then go to committee for amendment and fine-tuning, and it comes back for third reading. This is second reading debate in principle.

I would encourage those on the government side and those in the House who may have concerns about whether this bill is perfect or not to say that those imperfections, if there are any, can be amended and fixed at committee. I would hope it would go to the social development committee so that could happen, but I hope all members of this House will support this bill in principle.

I would say to them that it is not inconsistent with any piece of legislation. What it does is expand the existing rights that are in other pieces of legislation and clearly in one bill states that they apply to everyone in the province. It is not an unnecessary duplication. In fact, it is a duplication of what is already existing in some pieces of legislation, but it is appropriate duplication because we cannot restate too often the rights that we have, nor is it an unnecessary duplication to put all of those rights in a compendium in one place where it can act as both a public education tool and an opportunity for people to know what their rights and responsibilities are. It is a restatement of those rights, not a duplication.

I know there are some concerns from the colleges about the impact on the regulated health professions legislation. I would say to them and to all members of this House, there is nothing in this bill that would have a

negative impact on those colleges. If they believe there is, we could amend the bill at committee. I would be open to do that. The intention here is to ensure that the public interest is protected and that we defend ourselves against the dismantling of health care by enshrining individual rights and let people know what those rights are.

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr Silipo moved private member's notice of motion number 14:

That in the opinion of this House, since there is a significant and growing sense of cynicism and alienation towards the political process of Ontario and it is to the benefit of all to restore the relevance of government in people's lives; and

Since the present system does little to address the growing cynicism among the electorate towards the political process; and

Since the fairest and most democratic system of election is one which results in the composition of the Legislature reflecting as closely as possible the preferences of the electorate; and

Since the present "first past the post" system of electing members to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario does not mirror the voters' preferences adequately, usually resulting in majority governments being formed by a party receiving a minority of voter support; and

Since the present legislative system grants little constructive role to the opposition parties although they usually represent a majority of voters' preferences; and

Since the Mike Harris government is committed to introducing legislation to change the electoral system by reducing the number of MPPs in the Legislative Assembly and this will provide an opportunity to review the entire electoral system to make it more democratic;

Therefore, as one major part of reforming the electoral system of Ontario,

(a) Members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should be elected by a system of proportional representation which would better reflect the wishes of the voters and promote better representation of women and the diversity of Ontario in the Legislature; and

(b) This system should be applied on a regional basis to maintain the appropriate balances between urban and rural Ontario; and

(c) The Legislative Assembly committee should examine the various possible models of proportional representation which could be applied to Ontario; and

(d) The Legislative Assembly committee should report back to the Legislative Assembly with one or more models of proportional representation for Ontario which could be incorporated by the government into the legislative changes required to reform the electoral system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. This resolution clearly calls on us to look seriously at changing the way in which we elect members to this Legislative Assembly and looks seriously at adopting proportional representation as the method we should do that by.

I should say at the outset that on the proportional representation, there are a number of models that exist throughout the world, so it's important that people not think of proportional representation as one system. The basic tenet of it, of course, is similar in each of those jurisdictions and it is based on the sense that people vote for a party, very consciously knowing that the vote they cast in the election will translate itself roughly in the same proportion of members, in the Legislative Assembly in this case. That's the essential principle.

I would suggest that is a more democratic way of reflecting, through the electoral process, the wishes of the people of the province. So I bring this forward because I believe it is one of the ways to make our system of government more democratic.

All of us know the growing cynicism that exists out there towards not just individuals or political parties but indeed to the whole electoral process and to all politicians. I think it behooves us, again irrespective of political parties, to look at ways in which we can make the whole system of government more relevant to people and thereby also attack that sense of cynicism that exists out there.

I am not suggesting that simply changing the system of government is going to, in and of itself, resolve all of those problems that exist out there. I believe other changes should be seriously contemplated. I'm one who has long advocated, for example, for a greater role by individual members in the Legislature. As one example, I've continuously supported in a very strong way the private members' hour as being fundamental to the workings of this Legislature, but also to better democracy in this province, and would actually be happy to see that expanded in a number of ways. I'm one who believes that both as it relates to individual members of the opposition and individual backbenchers within the government, there ought to be more flexibility in terms of the role people play; that bills that come from the government, for example, should not be seen as hard and fast.

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I argued this when I was in government and I argue this today. So it's not a question of going at one party or another. It's a fundamental principle that I believe in, because I think in that kind of give and take that takes place through the committee process, by listening to the public, by listening to each other, we can make better laws. I think above and beyond the philosophical and partisan views that we bring to any issues, which are also a very legitimate part of the political process, we would also want to acknowledge that there is something we can learn from each other when we actually listen to each other.

Unfortunately, the process we have in place now is one that is so rigidly set that it really doesn't allow for that kind of healthy debate and healthy give and take. So I believe there are a number of changes that should be made to the way in which this place works that would make it more relevant for people and therefore would help to break that sense of cynicism.

I believe that fundamental to any changes we would want to make has to be the way in which we are elected to this place. I think if you look back at the history of

elections in this province, and indeed at the national level, you will find that in election after election, until you go back in time to the 1930s—and we now have the experience of every single party of the three main parties in Ontario having formed the government—every single party which has formed a majority government has never done so with a majority of the popular vote; it's always been done on the basis of a minority of votes. That is rendered even worse, in my view, when you look at the fact that the proportion of the vote that each party gets is not even equivalent to the proportion of people who could vote, because of course not everyone who can vote does.

For example, if you want to take a look at the last couple of elections, we see a situation in which in the last election the Conservatives formed the majority government after winning 44.8% of those who voted, which represented only about 28% of the eligible electorate. In the previous election to that, because again I want to make sure this is not seen in a partisan way, when the party that I'm a member of in the 1990 election formed a majority government with 37.6% of the vote, that only represented 24% of the eligible electorate. So there are problems, as you see, with the system in terms of it not reflecting a majority and, on the other side of it, in effect putting the opposition, who do collectively receive a majority, in a situation where they collectively only can muster a minority of votes in this House.

That again is something that transcends this current Legislature. It goes back in time, as I say, right through our political history. So I believe it's something we need to change. I believe it's something that would make the system more relevant to people.

One of the arguments I've heard against this notion is, "Wouldn't it mean we would likely have more minority governments in this province?" To that I would have to acknowledge that it may be the case. But I would say two things to that.

First of all, it would be a decision which the people of the province would make more consciously, knowing in effect that under the proportional system of election, they would be making that decision as to whether they wanted to vote wholeheartedly for one party or indeed if they did not.

Secondly, I would also say, look back at the history of this province and indeed you will find that some of the changes in law that were made during the time of minority governments—and again we've had various combinations of minority governments in this province, so that's what makes it even more relevant—you will find that some of the more lasting changes in any area of law that you want to look at are those that have come about as a result of minority governments.

Why? Because it is when you have that situation that you have to build a broader consensus and a broader acceptance as to the changes you want to bring about. Isn't that, after all, the basis of democracy, of having in effect not just a party which happens to command for a three-, four- or five-year period a majority of votes being able to come in and do what they wish and then having another government come in a couple of years after that and completely change that around? How is that at the

end of the day reflecting the wishes of the people of the province, as opposed to a system that allows perhaps some more gradual change but yet change that reflects a broader consensus within our population and therefore is more lasting and transcends in some ways even the partisan differences that all of us obviously bring to this House, and legitimately so? That is one of the fundamental reasons why I also believe the proportional system of government is one that would make more sense.

Looking at Ontario and recognizing that there are indeed a variety of differences that are reflected in our current system in terms of balancing, for example, northern Ontario, which has large areas geographically that have to be represented with relatively smaller populations than, for example, an area like Metropolitan Toronto, I believe that if we were to look at a system of proportional representation, we would need to look at it on a regional basis that would maintain that sense of balance. Otherwise, we would really be skewing the representation disproportionately, I would argue, in favour of the large urban centres.

I would argue that that's part of the work we would need to do, and that's why I've also suggested a process for us to deal with this, which is that we look at this through the Legislative Assembly committee. We could look, through that examination, at the various models that exist throughout the world, models such as the one in Israel, which uses a complete proportional representation on a national level, to models like in Germany, which has a hybrid model between having half of their members elected on the proportional system and half elected on the single-member constituencies that we use, which I personally would think is probably a more useful model for us to take a look at. But again I'm suggesting that this is something we should look seriously at through the Legislative Assembly committee, and particularly do so now, because clearly the government of the day has indicated its intention to reduce the number of seats. So there are going to be changes.

I, for one, am quite happy to support that reduction of the number of members in this Legislature, but I also say to the government members that therefore now is the time for us to look a little bit more broadly at the whole system we have in this province and to bring back some suggestions to this Legislative Assembly that the government could look at as potential models to weave into the legislation they would need to bring in in order to put into law their intent to reduce the number of seats.

It's with that intent of wanting to promote a discussion and wanting to promote a process that allows for that discussion that I ask members to support this resolution.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's my pleasure to speak against this resolution this morning in the House. In the preamble, Mr Silipo mentions the growing cynicism in this province, in this country, about politics and politicians. There certainly is, and I think it's fuelled by resolutions such as this. Today, now that the third party sits in opposition, they believe it's an excellent idea to change the entire premise behind our parliamentary democracy, when for the last five years Mr Silipo and his colleagues were in a position to mandate

that change. I think that sort of opportunistic approach to democracy is inappropriate, to say the least.

It's a topic with which the member is eminently familiar. You will recall that in 1990 his party was elected with the smallest ever percentage popular vote to translate into a majority government: 37%. Clearly, if there was ever a time to go to proportional representation, it was in 1990, because 63% of the people in this province did not want the policies, did not want the personnel, of what is today the third-place party, the NDP. Our support, at 45%, is clearly higher than what the NDP achieved in 1990; in fact it's one of the highest percentages of popular support in recent memory.

What is even more appropriate perhaps is to recognize that while there are lies, damn lies and statistics, and you can play fun with numbers, the bottom line is that the majority of members on this side of the House at least were elected with over 50% popular vote in their own riding. Based on the system we have today, it is what happens within each riding that is relevant to the election of members. In my case it was 55% of the people of Scarborough East who chose the policies of the PC Party. I believe I do have the right to stand in this House—not 55% of me in this House and 45% of somebody else whose policies were repudiated by the majority of voters in my riding.

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It stretches credibility, as Mr Silipo has put in his resolution, to say, and I'm quoting, the opposition "represent a majority of voters' preferences." I guess, depending on how one defines "opposition" on any given question on any given day, perhaps you can make that case. But his party received only 20% of the popular vote in last June's election, clearly not deserving of any kind of disproportionate representation. In fact, the number of seats they have is only a half dozen less than they would have achieved had there been proportional representation last year. It's that kind of math that lets his party say that a \$10-billion annual deficit and \$100 billion in accumulated debt were good for jobs, growth and opportunity. But they found out last June that those policies were clearly repudiated.

Why not go one step further and scrap Parliament altogether? Why don't we just sign a long-term contract with Angus Reid to poll the populace on issues of the day? That would give you a true representation; that would take away any bias. We would be able to rule every day on what the majority of Ontarians believe on any issue. Of course, it's slanted by the way Angus Reid poses the question, but I guess it would solve the conscience of those who were defeated in the last election that this was somehow a more fair system.

With his motion, this member would throw out the history of hundreds of years of parliamentary democracy, a finely tuned and representative political system. The system is based on the principle that every area of our province has fair and equal representation in government. The system he proposes cannot come anywhere close to matching the level of fair representation from the regions that parliamentary democracy guarantees.

The most obvious weakness is that there would almost always be a minority government, and as long as the

voting traditions we've seen in the last 30, 40 years were maintained, we would wind up with a scenario much like Italy's, which has seen four general elections in the last three years and 55 general elections in the last 51 years.

According to Elections Ontario, when you recognize that the cost of holding an election is \$42 million, you can do the math and figure out what further debt we would have in this province if we had indulged that sort of flight of fancy that the Italians have. By the way, the Italians are now desperately trying to change and go to a system more akin to a parliamentary democracy, such as the one we enjoy here today.

Another concern would be the arbitrary selection of candidates. In most proportional representations across the world, it is the leader who then selects who will sit in the government or in the opposition benches, depending on their ranking.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Where would Peter Kormos be under that system?

Mr Gilchrist: Where would any member be? Right now, it is the people in every riding who have a chance to meet their candidates face to face, to hear their policies, to know exactly where they stand on the local issues as well as the provincial issues. They're able to pass judgement on the quality of candidates who are standing in the name of each of those three parties. We're not a system based on a red book or a blue book or a green book. We are a system where the voters of this province have a chance to talk to the candidates and to determine for themselves who is credible, who is honest, who is going to do the best job of standing up for their interests in this House. The voters had that chance last June and the results are here in this chamber today.

I for one would be very concerned, for example, that if the system had worked out, that even if Mr Harris had been the winner last year under a system of proportional representation, he would have been able to pick 82 members at will. I don't know if it would be the same 82 members the voters selected. The same would hold true for Mrs McLeod and the former leader of the third party, Mr Rae. Clearly the system we have today more accurately reflects the wishes of local voters.

Certainly the aim of better representation of women and the diversity of Ontario in this Legislature is a very laudable goal, but imposing mandatory quotas for who should be elected, as the member's first recommendations would seem to suggest by encouraging "better representation of women and...diversity"—we saw the results of that in the quotas they brought forward on job hiring, since repudiated by the voters and rejected by our government.

Aside from being a great ideal, his resolution does nothing to further democracy, does nothing to promote fairness and is opposed to our accepted notions of democracy, one of the central pillars of equality in this country.

Our government will introduce, as promised, legislation to reduce the number of representatives in this chamber, and I'm immensely proud of that fact. We will be reducing from 130 down to 103 the number of MPPs. If the federal members can represent the relevant number of voters they do, I think it's incumbent upon us to follow

that example and, in so doing, save the taxpayers even more money. We will lead by example and show the people of Ontario that even in this Legislature we can do better with less.

With this reduction, our government will continue to do what we said we would do during the June 8 election. The fairest and most democratic political system is one that allows its people to vote for the party that best represents their interests, leaves them free of government interference in their everyday lives and allows them to prosper. That is the system of parliamentary democracy, and our government will continue to uphold those traditions of fairness and equality. Again, with all due respect, I will be voting against Mr Silipo's resolution.

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I would like to thank the honourable member for Dovercourt for bringing forward this very important resolution. The issues it raises about parliamentary representation I believe are critical to the future of this Legislature and even to the democratic process itself.

I would first like to offer a brief word in support of the idea of proportional representation. Only in a two-party system does the current "first past the post" system represent the will of the majority. As a result, since the emergence of the NDP in Ontario, we have seen the election of majority governments that were not the choice of the majority of voters. It is not surprising then if electors feel that the reins of government are controlled by arcane forces beyond their control. A review of that system should therefore, I believe, be given serious consideration by this Legislature.

That being said, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak for a few minutes about an issue that my honourable colleague has raised in this resolution and that I and others feel passionately about. In the course of the last election, the Premier dramatically illustrated how he would reduce the number of members of Parliament in Ontario. A lineup of some 30 chairs represented the number of elected members who would be removed from the Legislature under his government. For some people this was a positive message, but it suggested an idea that needs to be examined more closely: Can the number of provincial legislators be significantly reduced without diminishing the electorate's right to democratic representation?

I stand today to urge caution. I stand today to warn against grandstanding for easy votes from a weary public. I stand today to urge sober consideration of the consequences of such action. We hear people complain every day that they have no voice in government. What's being suggested is a further erosion of their chance to have a say. It's really not about protecting the jobs of a number of those among us. I think we would all agree that being a politician is not the easiest job, and our fan club is small. Rather it's about protecting the interests of the people of this province and enhancing the effectiveness of their representatives.

Assuming that legislation would be introduced, I would like to touch upon some of the issues that will need to be considered. I hope therefore that the debate on this resolution would be just the beginning of a discussion that will involve all members of all parties and not be

restricted to those around the cabinet table. We must resolve these serious issues using the best information and experience available so that democracy is enhanced, not eroded, by any changes that are brought about.

The Common Sense Revolution promised to cut the number of MPPs from 130 to 99, suggesting that the reduction would save taxpayers money. Beyond appealing to the cynical view that non-existent politicians are the best politicians, the idea in reality makes no sense from either a practical or a financial point of view.

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The practice of politics and governing has changed dramatically since the years 1955 to 1960, when Ontario last had the number of legislators being suggested. Apart from representing a much smaller population, MPPs attended very short legislative sessions. They were not involved in committee work as we know it. They had no members' offices and did virtually no constituency work. Politics was the domain of the backroom politician. The public expectation and legislators' commitment to constituent representation were different then. I wonder if this is what the Conservatives envision for the future: a muting of the public's voice and a concentration of power in the hands of a few.

An argument can be made for increasing the number of MPPs, rather than cutting our numbers back. In 1955 each member represented on average some 54,000 constituents. Today each member represents 86,000. Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction that has reduced its legislative membership, justified on the basis of a shrinking population.

With respect to concerns about cost, an American study has shown that smaller legislatures spend more per capita, not less, and therefore "A size reduction cannot be expected to lower the state's budget significantly." Logic would suggest that should the number of MPPs be reduced, larger numbers of constituents would raise each member's campaign and operational costs. The costs of maintaining a satisfactory level of constituency work would also rise, and so would travel and the need for staff.

I must admit that I have an aversion to putting a cost on democracy. I've been an election observer in countries where democracy does not exist, where they long for what we have, where what we have cannot be bought but must be struggled for. Democracy may indeed bear a heavy cost, but even so, we must not withdraw its mechanisms for the saving of a few dollars. No modern jurisdiction has ever reduced the numbers of its representatives. England, the democratic system we model ourselves after, has not conceived to do so, even under the most conservative of governments and the greatest of financial pressures.

The government's thought is to harmonize provincial riding boundaries with those of the federal government. Common sense, perhaps, until you consider the scope and complexity of issues dealt with by federal politicians as compared to those of provincial representatives. The concerns we deal with at Queen's Park affect our constituents more directly every day. We need to be responsive to their concerns on a level that federal politicians dealing with national issues do not.

I would like to return to the issue that must concern us most of all. How can we best meet the need of the people of Ontario for a fair and responsive government? How can we safeguard a democratic system that we sometimes find so easy to take for granted and forget to be passionate about? On the other hand, how can we argue against the prevailing cynicism about politicians who work for nothing but their own interests if we draw farther away from them?

This will not be a topic for dinner conversation for most of our constituents, but this subject touches on our responsibility as legislators more than any other. It concerns the very fabric of governing, the preservation of the precious tools of democracy, transcending politics, serving those who elected us.

I would like to appeal, especially to the new members of the government, about how serious an issue this is. Do not sacrifice a democratic system our ancestors fought so hard to achieve for the sake of a few votes. The implications of a move like this are very, very profound. I urge you to do your homework, to learn from the experience of those in other jurisdictions who envy what we have been able to achieve. In closing, I urge the government to reconsider scoring short-term political points at the cost of compromising the democratic process. I urge the members present to support this resolution.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): In the five minutes that I have, I would like to try to go through this as systematically as I can so the members, especially the members of the government who are first elected here, truly understand what this resolution is all about. The issue here, guys, and I'll say it that way, is that the role of the MPPs in the present system of Parliament that we have now is very limited unless you happen to find yourself in the inner cabinet of Mike Harris's government or formerly in the inner cabinet of Bob Rae's government. That's the issue. That is an issue not only for you as a member, your role and how you do your work here and how you represent your constituents, but it is also a role of representing the people that you're supposedly elected to come here to speak on behalf of.

The reality in this place, because we have a "first past the post" system, is that we elect governments by majority even though the majority of people across the province, the total percentage of people, didn't want—for example, the Mike Harris government, with 44% or 45%, ends up in a majority government. So therefore, 55% of Ontarians don't have a say because you have a majority of seats. In our government, with Bob Rae around 40% of the popular vote, 60% of the people of Ontario didn't have a say. That is not how democracy should work.

The real problem here, quite simply, is that unless you're a member of Mike Harris's inner cabinet, you have no say. You sit in the back benches, you have to support what your government tells you to do; if you don't, you get disciplined. Is that the way you're supposing to represent the people of your riding? Is that what you want to be remembered as your contribution to this place? You guys have no clue; that's the problem. I think you need to start getting the point of this.

The larger issue here is that we need to try to find a way that all members of this assembly coming here have

an incentive to be able to work with all three parties, so that we're able to build a consensus on what legislation is needed for Ontarians. Just because I'm a New Democrat doesn't mean I'm always right; neither does it mean that, as a Conservative, every idea you have is right.

What should be happening in this Legislature, which is not happening now, is that there should be a greater cooperation between all three parties, so that when the government of the day says, "We want to balance a budget over a four-year period," there is at least a meeting of the minds and a working together of all the members in this assembly so that we can involve those people in our constituencies in those decisions and we're able to work together to get to the overall aim of what the government wants to do.

The way it sits now is, if you're not a member of the cabinet, you have absolutely no say. I don't see that as proper representation of the people of this riding.

Mr Gilchrist: That's not true. I mean, just because you did it.

Mr Bisson: That is true. That's the point. That's how it works for you guys. Our government tried to change that by making sure that the backbenchers had a greater say in caucus, and I think we went a long way towards doing that. But as many changes as we made as a government, I still think the system of Parliament that we have now isn't perfect.

What we are talking about doing in this resolution is simply this: It's to say, "Refer this matter off to a committee," because the government has stated it wants to reduce the number of MPPs in this House. I don't agree with that view. I think that is cheap politics trying to play into a cynicism of people out there by saying: "We're smart, we're best, we know how to do it. We're going to reduce the number of MPPs in this place, and somehow magically that's going to fix the problems of Parliament." It's going to do absolutely nothing to fix the problems of Parliament; all it will do is reduce the number of seats by some 20-odd members, saving you a few bucks. But what does that get you for changes in Parliament? It does absolutely nothing. What does that do for democracy? It does absolutely nothing.

In a constituency like mine, what will happen in my riding under the new boundaries is that the ridings of Cochrane South and Cochrane North will be merged. Either myself or my colleague Len Wood will run in the next election and will be elected back to this Parliament. The point becomes that whoever that person might be, he's going to have to try to service the needs of those communities, which find themselves geographically spread by as much as 700 miles. How you can do that properly is beyond me. They say that the federal members are doing it now. The federal members are not doing it now. That's one of the real issues going on.

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I say in all sincerity to the members opposite that we as parliamentarians should be trying to reform our system of Parliament so that it works not only for the public in regard to how our constituents have a say in this House, but how the members themselves work together so that we can work towards a consensus about how certain matters could be done. I see that as a positive force. If

you're able to bring all three parties together to find solutions for common problems, I think in the end you have a much stronger product with a much stronger buy-in on the part of people.

The problem with our system of politics today, especially the way you guys are going as Tories, is the polarization of the people in this province. They are either with you or they are against you. I don't see that as a particularly powerful thing. There are lots of examples we can look at. We can look at what was done in New Zealand, which has a new system coming out in 1997.

I think there was all kinds of opportunity and I would ask members to at least support this so that we can move forward with the debate and try to find a way to make Parliament really work for the people we represent.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd first like to compliment the member for Dovercourt for introducing this resolution and for his concern about proportional representation, recognizing women, recognizing diversity in Ontario and also regional representation.

There are several systems of proportional representation—the list system, the single transferable vote system, the mixed electoral system, to name a few—but these systems are all very complicated and very confusing to the electorate. If they're cynical now, just imagine how cynical they would become if we were to introduce a very complicated voting system.

With proportional representation it's extremely difficult to get a majority government. As a matter of fact, we wouldn't have had a majority government since 1937 here in Ontario if we had gone to proportional representation.

Proportional representation tends to encourage minority governments, tends to lead to a coalition style of government. When voters go out to vote, they're really not electing a government; when the government is formed, it's negotiations that go on after the election has occurred. This is when coalitions occur.

Negotiations don't just stop when the coalition government is organized. Those negotiations go on and on throughout the life of the government until finally that government collapses and we're back to another \$42-million election. At least, that's what it costs here in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. There is disorder in the House. This particular corner seems to be a problem. I would like to warn the member for Brantford that I'm a patient man but my patience is wearing just a little thin.

Mr Galt: Voting in proportional representation is extremely complex and ends up in voter confusion and complicated mathematical formulas. Granted, it does bring about better voter turnout, but the spoilage of ballots is much higher. I don't think we can afford, in this country, in a time of cynicism of the voter, to add confusion to the process.

Proportional representation encourages the emergence of extreme views. It takes these views, enhances their legitimacy and carries on far longer than the current whim that puts them in place, and that's certainly not advantageous to the parliamentary system. Unfortunately, it adds to the proliferation of parties. I for one believe

that we have enough parties here in Ontario and that we don't need the large number of parties they have, say, in Italy.

Mr Gilchrist: There's one too many already.

Mr Galt: Yes, there is one too many already.

There is a very high cost in changing the electoral system, and this point in time, when we're having to get our budget under control and trying to balance our budget, is no time to be moving to a more expensive electoral system.

The public are reasonably satisfied with the system we have today. They understand it. They do not believe it's perfect, but they certainly recognize the position we're in and they're not clamouring for a new change.

This is a very foreign concept to move in the British system. Really, when you're changing the electoral system, it should be by small changes so they're followed by the electorate, not great, big, major changes such as leaping to proportional representation.

There are many benefits to our present system. With the present system, we regularly have a majority government through a single party. It creates a more stable government, more capable of enacting legislative programs. I'm sure the NDP appreciated that when it was in government. It's relatively simple in the eyes of the electorate and there are no complicated formulas with our present system.

The Canadian Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing pointed out that the levels of women represented in elected assemblies are often attributable to variables other than the electoral system. For example, political parties' adoption of quotas for women candidates only seems to work when the quota system comes in.

We are looking at a new system of representation here in the province of Ontario. It's already been referred to. We're looking at dropping some 27 members, to 103. I believe that will simplify the process here in the province of Ontario. We can make the ridings the same size, we can make the polls the same size. It will be easier for the public to understand. We can even go a step further to make the polls the same size and the same shape for municipalities. We might even go another step whereby enumeration is the responsibility of the individual resident in that municipality.

In summary, I would like to stress the fact that I cannot support this particular resolution because this resolution would increase the confusion and the frustration of our electorate here in the province of Ontario. It would reduce the power of the voter, and this is a time when voters want to be more empowered rather than less.

To encourage multiple parties and more coalition governments—I do not believe that's the direction to go, as has been occurring in Italy—is a totally new system, and really we should be building on the present British system that we've used for so many years and have developed a tradition here in the province of Ontario. Going to proportional representation will not enhance the number of women here in the Legislature, it will not enhance the diversity, and that kind of proportional representation I don't believe is going to really enhance regional representation unless we come in with the quota system.

We have a system. It's been a tradition. It's not perfect, but it's a very good system. It's been working for many years, and I for one can continue to support our present system and not this resolution.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I am pleased to join the debate on this private member's bill, and I wish to compliment the member for Dovercourt for bringing this to the attention of the House.

If the level of debate that is going on this morning on this private member's bill is an indication, that is why we do indeed need some reform—some badly needed reform.

There is absolutely no reason why private members' bills such as this one here should die in the House when they are introduced for the first debate. This is an indication that deals are made, especially when we have a majority government. Deals are made behind the door and they are brought into the House, and those decisions are rubber-stamped against the will of the people. Good private members' bills die on the floor of the House without giving the people an opportunity to hear them, to hear the benefits or not. There is no private member's bill that should die on the floor of the House. Automatically, they should at least have some public input.

I would say, without reservation, that if this were the case, some very good private members' bills, with some very good ideas, wouldn't die on the floor of the House but would go forward and would make life much better for the people of Ontario. Unfortunately, when decisions are made behind doors, the political decisions made in this House, the ones who suffer are the people of Ontario.

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As the government says in principle, at least we could say let's support it in principle. The bill as it is presented does nothing more than to seek if there is indeed a better way to represent the people of Ontario, the people we so much wish to represent.

I have to take some serious concern with the member for Scarborough East when he says that every member in this House has been elected by over 50%. I would really like to see that. When a government is elected with 35%, 40% of the popular vote, I would like to see if every man indeed has been elected with 50% or more. But if that is the case, with political decisions, especially when you have a majority government, the only people to suffer are the people themselves.

The member for Dovercourt is saying, "I have an idea," this is the presentation of a private member's bill, let's give it a chance, let's give it an opportunity to go to committee level, to hear what the public has to say, and then, if there is nothing that would make the existing system any better, let's kill it at the time. But until that happens, we should not base our decisions solely on a political basis because many good-intentioned private members' bills die on the floor of this House because of political decisions without allowing the public out there to voice their approval or disapproval. Most of the time many good intentions die because of political interference, political decisions, decisions that are made behind closed doors in somebody's caucus and then brought into this House and rubber-stamped.

There are many cases. We have seen this morning, for example, with the health bill proposal by the member for

Oriole, the government say it is good, but it doesn't solve the problem so we can't support it. My goodness. Two weeks ago we saw my own private member's bill on insurance and we have seen the critic himself saying it is wonderful, does nice things, but since it doesn't solve all the problems associated with the insurance system, we can't support it. How do you like that, Mr Speaker? Things that really do good for our people do not receive the necessary support of the House because of political interference. I wish to support the bill as it is presented. Let's give it an opportunity, let it come back and see what proposal we could indeed support.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the chance this morning to stand in this House and support the resolution by my colleague from Dovercourt. I think it's an idea whose time has come. It's certainly not a new idea. It's an idea that has been around for a long time.

It certainly precedes our time in government and the present government's tenure and has been talked about actually to some extent even in my own riding association. It was brought up at various times by individuals who would come to particularly annual meetings where resolutions are debated and brought forward to provincial conventions. It's an idea that in Sault Ste Marie has been particularly championed by Ted Hallin, who as late as last Monday at our annual meeting had a resolution passed by our own riding association that will go to our provincial convention in June in support of the notion, the idea, the concept that the member for Dovercourt has presented here this morning.

I think it's appropriate and timely, probably in two respects: one is what this government is proposing to do by way of downsizing the size of this House, and by that, I suggest to you, diminishing democracy in the province, where we should be trying to reach out and be in conversation with more people. What this government is proposing is going to do less of that and make this place more the place of the élite to come and present their ideas and have them become the order of the day.

Certainly in the north we will feel the brunt of what this government is proposing by way of changes to the electoral map, and I think we will find ourselves less and less with a voice and more out of the loop, not to speak of many of the communities of people that the member for Dovercourt in his resolution refers to. They have felt over the years and still continue to feel that they really don't have a voice in this place.

If you look at what has happened in the last five to 10 years in this Legislature and what people in my constituency are saying to me about that, I think it gives us reason for some concern, and also should give us some energy and momentum to actually move forward and have the courage to make the kind of change that is required so that this place truly becomes a democracy and representative of the diversity of people, of geographic areas and all the other things that make us both unique and one and also different, so that we can make decisions that reflect a respect for that.

I know in my own constituency the swings we have seen in this place, by way of majority governments that are actually elected by a minority of citizens, are reason enough for us to pass this resolution so that we can have

that conversation and that debate that will hopefully lead us to making some change, and hopefully some change in the spirit and direction that is suggested by the resolution in front of us here today.

In the interests of democracy, knowing that the essence of democracy is that more and more people have a voice and that the debate that happens in this place more effectively reflects that, I suggest that today is a good time to begin the discussion, to carry forward the discussion that is proposed here re the changes that are suggested so that we don't have in the jurisdiction of Ontario continual swings, and I say this without any apologies, from way left to way right, and a population out there that become the victims of some of the decisions that are made.

I know being in government over the last five years and listening to the leader of our party, the then Premier, Bob Rae, on different occasions say that a government has to be careful that it doesn't get too far out in front of the people it governs, I think the kind of government we have now, the electoral process we have now allows for that kind of thing, and I think it does us all, in the long run, more damage than it does good. So I'm standing here today in support of my colleague's motion and I'm urging other people to do the same.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to join in this debate because I want to try to bring it back to the focus that the member for Dovercourt originally put on it. I generally believe that more democracy is a good thing, and it goes with that that less democracy is a bad thing. What we have in Ontario now is a trend towards less democracy. If you look at the voter turnout and the voter turnout trends in provincial elections, you will see we are headed in a direction where the turnouts now are 60% to 65% of the electorate.

That is not very good. That is not a very good statement. What it says is there's at least 35% to 40% of the electorate who have essentially given up on taking part in democratic politics, who have given up on taking part in democratic activity. That does not bode well for the future. Where you have jurisdictions and the voter turnout is tending to be 60%, 55%, 50%—I look south of the border now, and it's not unusual to have voter turnouts of less than 50% in the United States—that does not bode well for democracy. It does not give people the sense that they are involved in any real way in the decisions of their province, their state, their country.

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What the member for Dovercourt is actually proposing is he's asking this House to have the courage to look at another system of government which would allow for more democracy. Yes, it would allow for the expression of more minority opinion. It might allow for the expression of more regional opinion. I come from a part of the province that has generally felt alienated from the province as a whole. In fact, about every 10 or 15 years in northern Ontario someone floats the idea that northern Ontario ought to form a separate province, and the reason that idea is floated and is taken seriously is that people feel that democracy in Ontario does not work as well as it should work.

I've heard particularly members of the government talk about this in terms of, "If 50% of the people in your constituency voted for you, then it must be okay." I think not. A real democracy not only looks at the representation of the majority; it looks at the representation of minorities; it looks at the representation of regional interests; it looks at the representation of the general diversity of the jurisdiction and the general diversity of the population. That is not happening now.

Over 70% of Ontario's land mass is inhabited by a majority population that is not represented here at all: first nations. I would say there is something wrong with our working of democracy if over 70% of the land mass of Ontario has as its majority inhabitants first nations and none of them is represented in this Legislature. There's obviously something askew here.

What the member for Dovercourt is actually asking for here I believe is that we have the courage to look at another form of representation which will provide for more democracy, which will provide for a greater representation of the uniqueness that we find in this province, of the diversity that we find in this province, both defined in terms of regional expression and in terms of the diversity of the population.

I would hope that some of the members opposite would put aside whatever their particular partisan interests might be. Since we are now engaged in this discussion about some kind of reform of this place, we ought to look at how we can further the interests of democracy, how we can create more democracy in this place and how we can achieve greater representation. For that reason, I'll be supporting this and I hope others will be supporting it as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member for Dovercourt like his two minutes?

Mr Silipo: I want to say I appreciate very much the comments from all members of the House who've spoken on this, although I also have to express my genuine surprise at the tone of the two speakers from the government side who spoke against the resolution.

I can certainly accept people not liking this resolution and being against it. I find it harder to accept the harshness and the kind of arrogance that I think was expressed, at least in some of the comments, because it says to me that there is very little appreciation of the fact that this is private members' hour and this is a time that we all have as members, regardless of being on the government side or on the opposition side, to put forward ideas through bills or resolutions to be looked at, hopefully, in a non-partisan way. I regret very much that at least the government members who decided to speak on this have very clearly chosen to see this as a partisan issue.

Yes, it's true, when I was a member of the NDP government we didn't enact legislation to do this. Fair criticism. I could also turn that around and say, "Why didn't they do it in the 42 years that they were the government?" That doesn't get us any farther ahead. Nor do we go any farther ahead by cutting up systems like the Italian system where people have been trying and I think have been finding progress through a hybrid of the systems that we have in place now which, interestingly enough, the members opposite chose to ignore. Would the

new system that I am suggesting be more confusing to the electorate? I don't think so, because I have more faith in the wisdom of the electorate than I think the member for Northumberland has.

In summary, where the PR system has been used, it's been shown that in terms of gender equity and I think equity around all other areas, it is a more equitable system. People should look at it more seriously before saying no to it.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege.

The Deputy Speaker: If you have a point of privilege, you should let me know in advance.

Mr Murdoch: I'm sorry I didn't let you know in advance. I'll do it on a point of order then. It was going to be a point of privilege. Mr Speaker, I would just like to introduce the mayor of Dryden, Bill Salonen, who is sitting up there. I just wanted you to know that he is in the House.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the public galleries behind me is the former mayor of the city of Windsor, and probably the most popular former mayor of the city of Windsor, John Millson.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS, 1996

CHARTE DES DROITS DES PATIENTS DE 1996

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We'll deal first with ballot item number 23, standing in the name of Mrs Caplan. If any members are opposed to voting on this ballot item, they will now please rise.

Mrs Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 41. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will vote on this after we have dealt with the other item.

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We'll deal now with ballot item 24, standing in the name of Mr Silipo. If any members are opposed to voting on this ballot item, they will now please rise.

Mr Silipo has moved private member's notice of motion number 14. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There will be a five-minute bell. Please call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1209 to 1214.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS, 1996

CHARTE DES DROITS DES PATIENTS DE 1996

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Ballot item number 23, standing in the name of Mrs Caplan. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Fox, Gary	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Froese, Tom	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Galt, Doug	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gilchrist, Steve	Preston, Peter
Beaubien, Marcel	Gravelle, Michael	Ross, Lillian
Boushy, Dave	Hampton, Howard	Ruprecht, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Sergio, Mario
Brown, Jim	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Ron	Sheehan, Frank
Caplan, Elinor	Laughren, Floyd	Silipo, Tony
Carroll, Jack	Leadston, Gary L.	Skarica, Toni
Castrilli, Annamarie	Martin, Tony	Smith, Bruce
Cordiano, Joseph	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Crozier, Bruce	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn	Turnbull, David
Duncan, Dwight	Morin, Gilles E.	Wood, Bob
Fisher, Barbara	Murdoch, Bill	
Ford, Douglas B.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. The bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I'd like to ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on social development.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the majority in favour of referring it to the standing committee?

Those in favour, please rise.

Those opposed, please rise.

The majority of the House not being in agreement, the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it should be noted that this vote originally was done unanimously.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Silipo has moved ballot item number 24. Is it the pleasure of the House that the resolution carry?

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Morin, Gilles E.
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Murdoch, Bill
Boyd, Marion	Hampton, Howard	Ruprecht, Tony
Castrilli, Annamarie	Hoy, Pat	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Laughren, Floyd	Silipo, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Fox, Gary	Pettit, Trevor
Baird, John R.	Froese, Tom	Preston, Peter
Barrett, Toby	Galt, Doug	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Gilchrist, Steve	Sampson, Rob

Boushy, Dave	Hastings, John	Shea, Derwyn
Bradley, James J.	Johns, Helen	Sheehan, Frank
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Ron	Skarica, Toni
Brown, Michael A.	Leadston, Gary L.	Smith, Bruce
Carroll, Jack	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Duncan, Dwight	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Fisher, Barbara	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wood, Bob
Ford, Douglas B.	Parker, John L.	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 17, the nays are 35.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the resolution lost.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just ask you to clarify the situation with the two separate votes, whether there are two five-minute bells or not. I see some members of the assembly left to go to a meeting after the one vote and some people left and some people didn't and from all sides of the House. I'm just wondering how that works.

The Deputy Speaker: The rules are that there will be one five-minute bell and that there will a pause in between to let those who wish leave.

It now being 12:23 o'clock, I declare this House adjourned till 1:30.

The House recessed from 1223 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL DISASTER**

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): Ten years ago, an explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in northern Ukraine sent nine tonnes of radioactive debris across western Europe, permanently altering the lives of millions of innocent people.

It remains impossible to gauge the extent of damage done at Chernobyl or its potential effects upon future generations, but some things we know that are for certain. The Ukrainian ministry of health has produced alarming figures: 125,000 Chernobyl-related deaths. In Zhitomir Oblast, for example, the number of deaths of children suffering from oncological diseases—that's cancer—has doubled over the past year alone.

So the April 26, 1996, day marks the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear explosion. It is not an occasion to celebrate, but it is a solemn reminder of an atrocious event which must not be forgotten. Chernobyl was a tragedy that must not be allowed to happen again. So there will be a candlelight ceremony right in front of this Legislature to mark this 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the Ukraine.

It's the Children of Chernobyl Canadian Fund. The organizers are pleased to invite all members of this Legislature to attend. It will be tomorrow, April 26, at 7 pm in front of this Legislature. I only hope that many of our members will be able to attend this requiem service.

WALK AGAINST MALE VIOLENCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This year the Niagara region is the location for the walks against male

violence. On Saturday, April 27, people from across the region will be walking against male violence from St Catharines to Vineland, leaving the Welland Avenue United Church at 11 am.

I'm especially proud, though, of the students who will be participating on Monday, April 29, in the students' walk against male violence. Young people like Chris Golden of Denistown Street, Kevin Thibault of Ontario Road and Ronald Tanguay of McAlpine Avenue, all of Welland and all from Welland Eastdale Secondary School, will be joining just hundreds and hundreds of other students participating in this walk against male violence, raising money and expressing a commitment to ending the violence by men against women.

Proceeds will be shared with the Niagara Regional Sexual Assault Centre. I am, as I said, proud of these young people. I shall look forward to joining them on Monday morning at 9 am as we leave Centennial school to walk to Merritt Island. I want to congratulate the organizers of this event. I want to express the pleasure that we feel in Niagara at being able to participate this year in a very direct way and I want to speak on behalf of the thousands of people across Ontario who have participated in these walks in solidarity against the unspeakable violence by men against women and with a commitment to ensuring that it ceases forever.

ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL DISASTER

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): With the Ukraine consul general present, I rise to call the attention of all members of the House to the 10th anniversary of the world's largest and most tragic nuclear disaster, a disaster that occurred in Chernobyl, Ukraine.

On April 26, 1986, a computer accident involving Chernobyl nuclear reactor number 4 set in motion a blast that released many times the combined radioactivity of Hiroshima and Nagasaki over Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and elsewhere, impacting the lives of countless millions of people. In Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, an eyewitness had this to relate: "My friend who worked with me in the same building went out for lunch. As it was a nice day, she returned red-faced and we all thought she was blushing for some undisclosed reason. Today she is dead. We had no idea what was going on at the time."

The curse of Chernobyl has not ended. It has not ended for the thousands of children of the Chernobyl disaster who are condemned to a life of weakened health and thyroid disorders, including cancer. The threat of another thermal blast continues to loom as does the very real danger of radiation contamination in the drinking water of another 20 million people in the wake of this year's flooding.

At this time memorial services and candlelight marches are being conducted worldwide to help us remember what the victims of Chernobyl are not able to forget. I invite all members of the Legislature to join me in remembering and in supporting relief efforts at home and abroad to help the victims. The world has embraced the suffering children of Chernobyl and we can do no less in Ontario.

ONTARIO HOCKEY FEDERATION CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I proudly rise today to congratulate the South Point Local 459 Atom Majors on their division A Ontario Hockey Federation championship in Dundas recently.

The South Point Capitals from Wheatley and Leamington went undefeated with four wins and one tie in five games. They defeated Erindale 2-0 to clinch the championship. The game was the culmination of an unbelievable year of 64 wins, 11 losses and four ties, as well as several tournament championships throughout the season.

Congratulations go out to team members Matt Anthony, Adam Bosimier, Mark Epplett, Dan Dawson, Chris Bonham, David Penner, Justin Renner, Kerry Bowman, Adam Whittal, Lance Tofflemire, Kyle Ukrainyc, David Armstrong, James Keller, Andy Anthony and to their coach Kirk Bowman, assistant Paul Child, trainer Mike Epplett and manager Jennie Klym.

DOWNTOWN CHURCH COALITION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): This morning clergy and laity of the newly formed Downtown Church Coalition in my riding of Fort York held a press conference here at Queen's Park. The purpose of the press conference was to present a petition to the Premier signed by over 1,600 members from 20 downtown churches who have united to improve the lives of the poor in their midst. The petition asked parishioners to support their appeal to the province to cancel the promised tax cuts and instead restore social service spending for the poor.

Those members involved in the Out of the Cold program and other drop-in programs have seen at first hand how government cuts to social services have increased the hardship of the poorest people in their communities. They have fed three times as many people this year as last year.

In the words of Reverend Jane Watanabe, priest at St James Cathedral: "If we see there's something wrong in society, we must speak out. The greatest burden of our government's deficit reduction is being borne by the poor, and that's unjust."

I would like to add my congratulations and thanks to the Downtown Church Coalition for their hard work, dedication and commitment to a cause that this government must, at some point, listen to.

LIONS CLUB OF BRIGHTON

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): This week the Lions Club of Brighton is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Over the past 50 years, the Lions of Brighton have contributed their time and resources to the Brighton area and to its citizens, and they have worked hard to build a strong community and a strong sense of community.

The Lions were the driving force behind the building of the first community arena in 1947. They have sponsored many teams and individual athletes. Lions have made substantial donations to the Trenton Memorial Hospital in support of the building program and have helped purchase medical equipment.

The Lions have supported those less fortunate than themselves. They have purchased countless pairs of eyeglasses, provided dental care, purchased orthopaedic devices and wheelchairs and have provided a car for the VON for the past 15 years.

They have assisted families in paying their heating bills, organized annual Christmas food drives and have held annual Christmas parties for needy children.

Service clubs such as the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, Kinsmen, Optimists and their partners, to name a few, have contributed significantly to the building of Ontario and making Ontario what it is.

With this week being volunteer week, on behalf of the government of Ontario I extend a big thank you to all of the volunteer work by our service clubs. The Lions motto is "We Serve" and the Lions Club of Brighton has more than lived up to this pledge.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): This Sunday working people around Ontario will pause and observe a day of mourning for our fellow citizens who have been injured or killed on the job.

More than 2,200 people have been killed on the job or died as a result of an occupational disease over the last eight years. Over that same period, more than three million claims have been registered with the Workers' Compensation Board. In 1995 there were 250 job-related deaths registered with the board; more than 375,000 claims were registered that year.

The cost to our economy of this human tragedy amounts to billions of dollars. More important, the cost to our friends and neighbours who are the victims and to their families is immeasurable.

Over the last 10 years, much progress has been made in reducing lost-time accidents, injuries and death. Unfortunately, the current government is pursuing a policy which will contribute to, and not reduce, the incidence of workplace injuries and fatalities. The government once again is being penny wise and pound foolish. Most regrettable, innocent working people, average citizens, middle-class taxpayers, will pay the price for this government's shortsighted, regressive workplace health and safety agenda.

1340

INDEPENDENT ORDER OF FORESTERS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The Independent Order of Foresters is one of the oldest and largest fraternal organizations in the world, with more than one million members in Canada, the United States and Great Britain.

Although the Independent Order of Foresters actually began in Newark, New Jersey, in 1874, its first Canadian court, Court Hope 0001, was instituted on April 26, 1876, in London, Ontario, and London was the site of the first Canadian headquarters from 1881 to 1888.

The Independent Order of Foresters offers many community services and has been an important part of our community for all of those years, and we celebrate with them their 120th anniversary.

The Independent Order of Foresters offers, as a community service, free fingerprinting services to assist the police if a child goes missing. They fingerprinted over one million children in the Niagara region alone last fall.

Court Hope 0001 has also contributed to such things as the Florence Hallum prevention of child abuse fund, which has given over \$45,000 to the child abuse movement. They also work with the Children's Hospital, the Reye's syndrome association, the sexual assault centre, the multiple sclerosis centre and virtually every other of our community-based groups.

On behalf of the citizens of London, Ontario, I congratulate the Independent Order of Foresters, Court Hope 0001.

ST JOSEPH SCHOOL

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): On behalf of the member for Mississauga North and myself, I would like to welcome to the public gallery 28 grade 8 students from St Joseph school in Mississauga.

In December, along with 36 other schools, this class entered a contest entitled Why I Love Canada. The students, under the guidance of their teacher, put together a 15-piece bristol board display, produced a video, and wrote poems and essays in both official languages. This class finished second in this contest, and since that time their efforts have been featured on CITY-TV, YTV and CTV, as well as numerous print media outlets.

These students showed how proud they are to be Canadian, how much they love our country and how much they want to keep it united. Now they have the opportunity to share those feelings with other Canadians as the exhibit the students have put together is now travelling and being displayed in Ottawa and Quebec City.

On behalf of the Legislature, I wish to congratulate the students on a job well done. I encourage all members to stop and view the display when it is at the CNE this summer.

When I look up at the public gallery today, I see a bright future for Canada.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION FINANCING

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'm pleased to announce today that this government is taking measures to respond to the concerns raised by small school boards regarding the total impact of the general legislative grant regulations.

On March 6, I announced that grants to school boards would be adjusted to achieve savings in out-of-classroom expenditures. Since then, my colleagues and I have had ongoing discussions with many trustees and staff from a number of small boards. They expressed concern that they have less flexibility in their operations than larger school boards and therefore less capacity to accommodate the required grant reductions. We have listened carefully to their concerns and have considered a wide range of options to help them.

What I'm announcing today will help mitigate the financial impacts on small school boards in a consistent manner across the province.

We will be modifying the general legislative grant regulations for small boards with fewer than 10,000 students. What we will be doing for these small boards is limiting the grant reduction to either 3% of the school board's operating expenditures or 15% of the board's 1995 grants, whichever is less. Our preliminary estimates indicate this special assistance will total approximately \$14.5 million. We'll have more accurate figures in May, after the school boards submit their financial estimates to the ministry. It is estimated that 27 boards will benefit from this special assistance.

Our ministry has focused on creating an education system that is based on excellence in quality education, affordability and accountability to all Ontario taxpayers. It is my belief that spending beyond our means, not underfunding, threatens the future of our students and all of Ontario. That's why we have to work together to achieve significant savings in our education system.

I am confident the change I am announcing today to general legislative grant regulations is a very fair and a very reasonable way to provide smaller school boards with the flexibility and assistance they need to achieve these savings.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I begin to wonder about the management style of this government and this ministry. A little slipup one day and the next day we have a new program. We were told we had \$5 million to help our boards that were in trouble over a period of time. Today we understand we have \$14.5 million because of the reaction of certain boards and the needs now of 27 boards.

Where have you been? We have been alerting you to this particular problem. Your office must have received the barrage of calls asking for the new formula by which they might be able to be reconsidered as well. I'm sure that's happened.

We now have \$14.5 million. It seems to me you had no idea of the impact on some of these boards. Some of these boards, as you well know, were reduced by over 50%. The board in Halton that one of your colleagues in cabinet has told you much about was reduced in its provincial funding by over 50%. In attempting to respond, I suppose this flooded over into the possibility of other boards making contact with your office in terms of Muskoka or the west Parry Sound board and a number of other boards.

Is this it? When will the boards be able to finally say: "We now know all of the arrangements. We know what the formulas are. We know that we now are able to submit our budgets to the ministry for approval"?

In my opinion, what we have is a situation that occurred through reviews and contacts and representations by the minister's colleagues. Having gotten involved on the political side, he now finds he has to come back to make an adjustment in figures for other boards and acknowledge the undue hardship that will affect many, many boards in this province.

What do we have? It seems to me we have a Band-Aid to the massive amputation of provincial funding to school

boards in this province. Where is this money going to come from, the \$14.5 million? Where are we going to take that money? There will have to be some kind of adjustment and some kind of formula.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Toronto. They're going to get it from Etobicoke.

Mr Patten: My colleague the member for St Catharines says, "Toronto." It may come from Toronto, it may come from Ottawa, on some of the deals that are being arranged there.

This is not a good day for the management of education in this province. Frankly, it's somewhat of an embarrassment. For those boards that do recognize and will receive some help, then I applaud that particular effort. But in terms of managing the whole system and understanding the impact on the educational system throughout Ontario, it's an embarrassment.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): The Minister of Education isn't his usual cocky self this afternoon and his mantra sounded just a little less enthusiastically delivered today. He reminds me a little bit of a kid who got caught with his hand in the candy jar. At least this minister was prepared to share the candy with his special friends. The only trouble was, he did get caught; he got caught making a special deal with one board of education. You could at least have shared the candy with the Minister of Natural Resources' other board, because poor Victoria county wasn't going to get your undue burden consideration; now it will. It wasn't five or six boards that just somehow had to get special consideration. Oops, there were 27 boards that got absolutely whacked by your policies.

1350

Minister, you have saved us some trouble because we were in the process of phoning board by board to find out which ones would fit the criteria you made up this week in the Legislature. We were going to make sure that every one of those boards that was getting more than a 15% cut in its grant would get your special consideration.

We would now like to see a list of the boards that are going to benefit from this new fund, but more than that, we want to know, and we deserve to know, exactly what factors were taken into consideration, because I can tell you that the factors that hit these 27 boards and sent them reeling and sent the Minister of Natural Resources begging to you for special consideration have hit every board in this province. We are going to spend our time now looking at the undue burden that your policies have placed—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired. Further responses?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): As my colleague said, the member for Victoria-Haliburton got caught with his hand in the cookie jar, so the Minister of Education had to then divide up the cookies among a number of other members of the House. The problem is that we don't know who is supplying the cookie jar here, other than that it's the one taxpayer this government likes to talk about.

The major question is, where is the \$14.5 million coming from to help pay for the resolution of this little crisis that the minister and his colleagues produced?

Surely the minister is going to tell us that the \$800 million he's taking out of the boards' budgets in one year, the \$400-million cut to the grants, is going to be decreased by this amount, because if it isn't going to be decreased, it means all of the other boards that are above 10,000, which are not going to have their grant losses capped at 15%, are going to be paying for it, particularly the Toronto board and the Ottawa board, but that also applies to every other board in the province that's going to have to make cuts. They're going to have to make even more now to make up for this little attempt to resolve the problem that a number of the boards are experiencing because of a deal that was made by Haliburton, or apparently attempted by Haliburton, and is now having to be matched for 27 other boards.

What are the names of all the boards that are going to benefit from this attempt to resolve the minister's problem? Can the minister explain what the criteria are for determining which of these boards—is it simply the numbers, the numbers of students, the enrolment, or is it based on any kind of impact study of the effects of the changes in the legislative grants?

It appears that this government is flying by the seat of its pants. It's not doing any of the impact studies that are normally done before the announcements of the legislative grants for boards across the province. Simply because one minister in this government was going to be hit harder, his board was going to be hit harder than the mythical 2% cut the minister has been touting around here, they had to resolve that. In resolving that, when they were caught, they had to match it for all the other boards of similar size.

How is the minister studying and planning for the education system in this province? Does he know what the effects of the cuts he's announced will be? It is impossible to take this amount of money out of education in one year and not adversely affect classroom education. It is simply impossible. You're slowly finding that out. You're finding it out now because you didn't do the studies in advance that you should have done to recognize you couldn't save all of these funds simply from administration. It's impossible to do this. It's impossible to have these kinds of cuts without at the same time hurting kids' education.

You've assisted 27 boards. After you tell us which ones they are and why you've assisted them, tell us how you're paying for this \$14.5 million. Are you not just taking it out of all the rest of the boards in the province?

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like you to review the Hansard of yesterday, if you could give us a determination on whether or not, from actions of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, "blackmail" and "extortion" are parliamentary language. With all due respect, I think your ruling was somewhat confusing. It would be very helpful if you could clarify whether you've ruled those in order or out of order, or is it completely left to the discretion of the member who has used the words?

The Speaker: As I mentioned yesterday, I had some reservations about the language that was used with regard to the leader of the official opposition. I've had the opportunity to review yesterday's proceedings as to the use of unparliamentary language. I found that the words used

yesterday by the honourable leader of the official opposition fall into a category of unparliamentary language.

All members are honourable members in this House and should be treated as such. Members may disagree with other members but I'm telling you, as I had indicated yesterday, I was concerned about it.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is once again to the Minister of Education. Yesterday the minister denied that there was a signed agreement between his ministry and the Metropolitan Toronto School Board which allows the minister to take some \$65 million from the pockets of local taxpayers in Metro Toronto and Ottawa. In fact, if we want to talk about descriptive parliamentary language, the minister yesterday described my questions as "flights of fantasy, imagination, conjecture." I suspect it was the same flight of fancy that led me to ask about the special deal with the Haliburton County Board of Education.

Imagine this, Minister, because I have in my hand a copy of the memorandum of agreement, a memorandum of settlement dated February 6, and unless it is another flight of fancy on my part, I believe that this memorandum of settlement is signed by John Snobelen, Minister of Education. I will have a copy sent to you just to refresh your memory so that you can assure me this is not another flight of my imagination.

As you will see in this memorandum of agreement signed by your hand, it is exactly what we set out yesterday: the terms by which your government is prepared to rob the local taxpayers in Metro Toronto of \$65 million in property taxes, money which was raised through property taxes for local education which you now want to take to pay for your tax cut, and absolutely contrary to what you said in this House and outside this House yesterday, this \$65 million, as stated in this signed memorandum, is in addition to making the savings of the social contract permanent.

Minister, will you acknowledge that you were wrong yesterday? Will you acknowledge that you do have a signed agreement that allows you to take \$65 million from local ratepayers in Metro Toronto?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): It's a privilege and an honour today to again be called upon first by the Leader of the Opposition in question period.

I can most definitely help her out with this situation. I have said before in this House that we have had ongoing negotiations with Metro on this subject. We have a challenge in front of us to make sure the savings that were created because of the social contract are made permanent, as they are in other boards around the province, so we have had a negotiation. On February 8 we did have an agreement in principle between the Metro board and the ministry. This agreement is not in force. It was conditional on several factors, and we continue to negotiate now.

1400

As I've said in this House before, we will have permission when we pass Bill 34 to continue the negotiations with Metro to find an agreement that reflects the needs of Metro and the needs of the province, and reflects the commitment of the board and this ministry to having a more affordable education system in the province of Ontario and a higher accountability for the education system in Ontario and greater quality for the education system in Ontario. I believe the boards and the province and the ministry are aligned on these areas.

Mrs McLeod: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Before placing my first supplementary, I would ask you to refer to the Hansard of yesterday, in which you will see that the minister very specifically said that there was no agreement signed that would take the \$65 million.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: No, Mr Speaker, I've raised a point of order which I have asked you to hear. I ask you to review the Hansard of yesterday, because I believe—and I will use parliamentary language—that this minister misled the House. I would ask you to rule on that. Having said that, I will place my supplementary question.

The Speaker: You can't use the word "misled" the House. That is unparliamentary. The word "misled" is not parliamentary language in this Legislature, and I would ask the member if she would withdraw the word.

Mrs McLeod: I will attempt, Mr Speaker, to find language which would allow you to review the situation of a minister providing inaccurate information and leave it at that—

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Deliberately inaccurate.

Mrs McLeod: —yes—and ask you if you can rule on misinformation provided to this House.

I will place my first supplementary to the minister because I want to draw his attention to the third paragraph of this agreement. In the third paragraph it states, "The government has indicated its intention"—and I remind you this is an agreement you have signed, a written agreement—"to use its funding and other powers to ensure that the school board should assume its proportionate share" of the \$400 million in spending cuts set out in the Finance minister's statement last November.

There is only one way to interpret this statement. It is, in deference to the Speaker's concern, political bullying and political intimidation. It says that if the school board does not agree to use local tax dollars, property tax dollars, to help fund Tory government cutbacks that are being used to pay for your income tax cut, you will use whatever powers you possess to get the money in other ways. It says in writing with your signature over it that this is what you are going to do. Will you now acknowledge that you put a gun to the head of the Metro Toronto school board and forced school trustees to use local tax dollars to pay for your tax cut?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, there seems to be some difficulty in communicating with the Leader of the Opposition. Let me say again what I said yesterday and what I said just a few moments ago, and that is that we have talked with the Metro school board ongoingly. We

have entered into an agreement in principle that is conditional and is not in force. It's not in force today; it was not in force yesterday; it will not be in force next week. We have an agreement in principle to do certain things. One of those things is to find a mechanism to make permanent the savings of the social contract, and that is one of the things we are endeavouring to do with Metropolitan Toronto. Everyone here I believe is representing the best interests of not only the taxpayers but the students in schools, and we will continue to do that.

Mrs McLeod: May I read to you what it clearly says in this signed memorandum of agreement?

"Whereas the government has made the expenditure reductions contained in the Social Contract Act...permanent; and

"Whereas the government on November 29, 1995, announced further expenditure reductions of \$400 million for the government's...transfer payments to the school sector; and

"Whereas the government has indicated its intention to use its funding and other powers to ensure that the school board should assume its proportionate share of such reduction...."

This minister cannot stand in this House again today, in light of a signed memorandum of agreement over his signature, and tell me this had anything to do with the social contract cuts. This signed agreement proves conclusively that there is no basis for any of the claims you have made in this place and there is certainly no basis for the claim you have made repeatedly that this request of Metro Toronto and Ottawa school boards to contribute towards your cutbacks and pay for your income tax cut is simply a request and is something they are going to do voluntarily, that your legislation is only permissive. This is not voluntary; you are forcing them to ante up or else.

You have forced this deal on Toronto and it is apparent that you are planning to force the same kind of bullying deal on the Ottawa Board of Education, and I call on you to stop this intimidation. Will you stop forcing school boards in Metro Toronto and Ottawa to use local taxes to pay for your spending cuts and a tax break that benefits the rich in this province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I recognize that the member opposite is looking at a memorandum of agreement, an agreement in principle that was signed some months ago, that represents an agreement the board and the province would like to arrive at.

This particular memorandum, just for the record, seems to have expired some two months ago. I can assure the member opposite that this is not in force in the province and I can also assure the member opposite that this government will work, and will work in cooperation with school boards, to make sure we have a fair and more equitable funding mechanism for our school system in Ontario. That's one of the things that we, as a government, are committed to, because we believe that's what the students and the parents and the taxpayers of this province deserve. We intend to fulfil that. We will work in concert with the school boards, the two school boards she has mentioned and other school boards across the province, to achieve this.

I want to assure the member opposite that while it is difficult to find a mechanism to make permanent the savings found in the social contract in addition to the savings we are asking school boards to make across the province—all school boards to make—spending reductions outside of the classroom, we are requesting that of all the school boards across the province of Ontario because we believe, and we know the public of Ontario understands, that savings can be made in our school system and that the quality of education can be enhanced. We will do that in partnership with educators.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to follow up on my leader's question. Yesterday in the House you said to us, you said to our leader, that you signed no document. You said there was no document that existed. You said she had some fancy imagination. You gave us, frankly, a flippant and an inaccurate answer.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Dishonest.

Mr Phillips: My colleague says "Dishonest." What I want to know from the minister is, why yesterday did you say you had not signed a document and now we find that in fact you have signed a document that you said yesterday you didn't sign?

Hon Mr Snobelen:—because this matter will be very easy to clear up. I said yesterday there was no deal in force; there is no deal in force with Metro. I said yesterday we will be negotiating a deal with Metro. We intend to do that. What we have in front of us today is a memorandum of understanding that expired some 60 days ago. I think if there is in some way something being misrepresented today in this chamber, it certainly is not from this side of it.

Mr Phillips: Frankly, no one over here believes anything you say any longer. I'll be clear to you. Yesterday you essentially said to our leader that there was no such agreement, that you'd never seen such an agreement, that she must have been referring to something completely different. Now we find that indeed you did sign an agreement, that indeed you did have conversations about this, that indeed you did negotiate with the Metro school board. Yesterday you implied you didn't. Today you're now caught. You are completely caught. Tell me one reason any of us should believe anything you say any longer in the future?

Hon Mr Snobelen: It's never a question of wondering whether the members opposite would believe; the question is, will they listen? Our government is on record from November 29 as saying that we would find these savings outside of the classroom in our school system. We believe that can be done and there's much evidence that can in fact be done. We said we would work with educators across the province and we are doing that. We said we would do it equitably, and I can reify that statement again today. We will do this equitably because we believe we have an interest in every student in this province and we believe all our taxpayers have an interest in education for our students. So we will continue to do that.

I will say this once again. As I said yesterday, I will say again today: We intend to negotiate such an agree-

ment with Metropolitan Toronto, with the school board. There is no such agreement in place now.

1410

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): How can the Minister of Education and Training dip in to raid Metro property tax dollars when you already know the Metro property tax system is in collapse? It's in shambles because nothing is being done. Now you're going to impose a new tax, a surtax on a system that's in collapse to take care of the damage you've done everywhere else in the province. How can you justify this raid, this grab on the property taxpayers of Metro who already pay the highest taxes in Canada?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I think the honourable member opposite has certainly indicated that previous governments that are represented across the floor have added to the tax burden of not only Metropolitan Toronto but the entire province. I can promise the honourable member opposite that this government will do everything it can to reverse those heavy tax burdens on the people of this province.

I can tell you this: It is difficult to find the mechanisms to make the social contract savings permanent, and also to look and to work with the board at finding other savings outside of the classroom. We intend to do that. I want to make sure that the honourable member opposite understands this. I know it's very difficult to understand this, but this government isn't seeking to use a shell game of taxation. What it's looking to do is to make real savings in our education system, to find those savings outside of the classroom so we can have a better education system in this province.

The Speaker: New question, the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training with regard to his credibility.

I'm looking at Hansard, page 2506, of yesterday. In the direct answer to a question where the minister was asked to confirm the existence of an agreement with the Metro Toronto board, the minister said: "We are seeking permission in Bill 34 to enter into an agreement with the negative grant boards in Ottawa and Metro Toronto, and when we have passage of Bill 34 we'll"—in other words, we will—"discuss this with representatives of those two boards."

Yet we have a memorandum of settlement dated February 8, 1996, between the Metropolitan Toronto School Board and Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Education and Training, signed by Ms Vanstone and by the minister, which says—this is even before Bill 34—

Mr Laughren: Or 26.

Mr Wildman:—or 26, for that matter. It refers to the social contract, but then it says: "And whereas the government on November 29, 1995, announced further expenditure reductions of \$400 million for the government's 1996-97 transfer payments to the school sector." It goes on to outline an agreement of a sum not to exceed \$65 million to be transferred.

How is that you could sign a memorandum of understanding, a memorandum of settlement, in February and then stand here in April and tell us that you will discuss

with representatives of the two boards after the passage of Bill 34?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the leader of the third party for bringing up two things which I think are very important in this discussion because they speak to the issue of credibility and consistency, and there's certainly a high degree of credibility and consistency on the part of this government and on the part of this ministry and on the part of this minister on this subject.

I also thank him—I'd like to do this at the start—for bringing up the fact that much of the requirement here is a requirement to make permanent the social contract savings. I thank him for pointing that out, because this certainly was a difficulty that was presented to both the board and the minister by the previous government.

We will seek to enter an agreement. We will seek to do it by agreement, through negotiation, with the two negative grant boards to recover those permanent social contract savings. Further, we will seek to find an acceptable mechanism for finding the savings outside of the classroom that we have asked all boards to do. We will be doing that.

We have in front of us today an attempt at doing that. That has expired. There are conditions involved in this memorandum in principle, this agreement in principle. It never had force in the province. We will look to this template, the template under the social contract, we'll work with the boards, we'll negotiate and we will try to find an acceptable methodology.

But as I said yesterday, we will do that. We intend to do that. It's fully been our intention. We've made that statement in the House on many occasions. However, we do not at this date have an agreement in force with either of those two boards.

Mr Wildman: The minister seems to be being very careful in his selection of words today as opposed to yesterday. Yesterday he engaged in his own flights of fantasy, accusing members of having fantastic imaginations.

It wasn't just yesterday, though. I've looked at Hansard, page 2165, on April 9, when the minister was answering the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore's question with regard to whether or not there was an agreement to take moneys from the Metropolitan Toronto board of education and transfer them to the provincial treasury. At that time, the minister said, "What we want to do is allow the province to enter into conversations with all those boards with the purpose—and I assume this would be the purpose of the members opposite too—of having a fair and equitable education system...." We want to "enter into conversations."

At no time has this minister acknowledged that they in fact did enter an agreement, a memorandum of settlement with the Metropolitan Toronto board which yes, did deal with social contract moneys, but on top of that, was to take an additional \$65 million for your own announced savings in November. It's not just social contract. It's more than that and you know it. Why won't you get up here and admit it and admit that you didn't share the whole truth with the members of this House in answer to questions about this supposed agreement?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe that the honourable member opposite has certainly brought to the attention of

this chamber that this agreement that we are seeking to reach with Ottawa and Metro is using the same sort of mechanisms that his government used to find social contract savings that are permanent across the board. We have now entered into a conversation or a discussion or a dialogue with boards that was initiated by the previous government, and so that's where we find ourselves.

I believe that the Minister of Finance said on November 29, "We intend to find those savings in an equitable way," and we will do that. I believe that we have said time and again that we intend to enter into those conversations, those discussions, those negotiations with the negative school boards.

Again I reject the implications that were made by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday and others that we would do this by some force; we will not. As is evidenced by everything in front of us, we will do this by negotiation, we will do this through conversation, we will do this by agreement.

Mr Wildman: Even in answer to our questions today the minister is not prepared to acknowledge what is obviously the case. Why is it that in answer to all of these questions that have been raised by various members of the House the minister has never once acknowledged the existence of this memorandum of settlement that he and the chair of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board signed?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I will answer the honourable member's question again. We have had discussions in the past. These discussions were built on discussions that were initiated during the social contract days. We have not reached an agreement. There is no agreement in force. We had a conditional memorandum based on the principles on which a settlement might be found. It was very conditional. It expired some 60 days or so ago, and this is not an agreement that's in force in the province. I think we've answered that question repeatedly, but I'd be pleased to answer it again and again if the member would like to ask it again and again.

1420

Mr Wildman: Perhaps the minister could explain why prior to or at least at the time of the introduction of Bill 34, which he says has a clause, we all know has a clause, to "allow"—the term that is used—the negative grant boards, Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa, to contribute funds from the property tax to the provincial treasury, he would not have acknowledged that this memorandum of settlement had been reached. Was it because he thought it would be too controversial and might harm the possibility of ensuring that this memorandum of agreement could be finalized and because he was afraid it might affect the attitude towards Bill 34 in cities like Metro Toronto and Ottawa?

Hon Mr Snobelen: If I had stood in this chamber, stood up in this House, and represented this as an agreement between the Metropolitan board and the government, I would have been misrepresenting the case, because it is not in force, has not been in force. This is an agreement in principle that has many conditions attached to it and that in fact has expired. So I would not mislead or misrepresent the case to this House that there is an agreement that exists between Metro Toronto and

the government because there is not one that has force of law and I would not wish to mislead this House.

Mr Wildman: As the minister continues to talk around this, will he please explain why it would be that the provincial government, in entering into an agreement with one of the largest public organizations in this province, the largest school board in the province, to take \$65 million from the property tax of Metro Toronto over and above whatever obligations were arrived at for the social contract—why he would not immediately announce that this agreement had been reached, why he would not inform the members of the House and the public of this? Why was it that he saw fit not to acknowledge its existence and to keep the memorandum of settlement secret?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the honourable member for continuing to ask the question, and I will continue to answer it. We have no agreement that has force. We have not had an agreement that has force.

I think we've been very clear about the principles we are operating under, the principles of equity and fairness. I don't think it will surprise the member opposite to know that there is a template for these discussions and that template existed within the structure of the social contract. So building on that template, we hope to arrive at some agreement with Metropolitan Toronto. We do not now have that agreement. There is no agreement in force. We had a conditional agreement in principle that has expired. It did not become an agreement in law, and so we are now back to having a discussion. We hope to do that post-Bill 34. That's our intention.

Mr Wildman: In answer to that question, the minister has described, I think, the current situation. He did not answer why it is that when the memorandum was reached, which he signed, he did not make it public. Why is it that it was kept secret?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Let me see if I can boil it down so that it's very understandable and very succinct. The reason I did not announce an agreement then, the reason I did not announce an agreement today, the reason I did not announce an agreement yesterday or a month ago or two months ago is because, for the honourable member's information, there is no agreement.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: I would place a question to the Minister of Education, and I take the minister back to my question of yesterday, my question in which I said just simply, "Minister, will you confirm the existence of this agreement with the Metro Toronto board?"

The Speaker: Minister.

Mrs McLeod: No, Mr Speaker, I'm quoting from Hansard of yesterday. That was the question that was placed yesterday. I had, previous to placing the question, outlined exactly the terms and conditions that are set out in this signed memorandum of agreement. The minister's response was essentially to deny that any such agreement existed and to suggest that I was referring to some negotiations that would make the savings of the social contract permanent.

The last page of this memorandum of settlement, signed by the minister, says very clearly in summary: "Social contract: amount owing, \$75 million; method of

extraction"—a good word—and it sets out the \$46 million, the \$4.5 million, the \$24.5 million to be extracted for the social contract savings.

Then "Expenditure reduction target" a further \$65 million; method of extraction exactly as we set out yesterday when I asked the minister to confirm the agreement. Minister, do you not say today you misinformed this House?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I think there really clearly would have been a misrepresentation to this House to say we had an agreement yesterday. We did not have an agreement. We do not have an agreement now, and we have a clear intention. We have an intention to find savings in our education system outside of the classroom. We have made that clear in this House on many occasions. We have an intention to do that equitably across our education system, and we have an intention which we have stated time and time again, including yesterday, to do this by negotiation and by agreement, and when those negotiations are successful, when Bill 34 is passed and when we reach an agreement, I will most certainly and gladly announce that to this House.

Mrs McLeod: The minister is playing word games. That's all this is. There is a signed memorandum of agreement dated February 8, 1996. The last paragraph, the one just before Mr Snobelen's, the Minister of Education's, signature, says:

"Both parties further agree that officials shall meet to develop a schedule which will detail the amounts to be used under each of the means specified above. Their work"—to put this in place, not to negotiate a new agreement—"shall conclude not later than February 28, 1996, or three weeks following the minister's announcement of the 1996 reduction figures and tools to achieve them."

If the minister says today that this memorandum of agreement, which he did sign and put in place, is no longer in effect, it's because he hasn't delivered on his share of the bargain. Minister, you signed an agreement to take \$65 million more on top of \$75 million from Metropolitan Toronto. Will you at least acknowledge you signed the deal to take that money from the property taxpayers of Metro Toronto?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The Leader of the Opposition, I know, is not attempting to misrepresent anything here, but to repeatedly suggest that there is a deal in place between Metro and the province, yesterday and today—there is no such deal in place. Let's be clear about this. We have said today and we have said time—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Snobelen: If the Leader of the Opposition will allow me to respond, we said yesterday, we said today, we said last month, we said on November 29 what our intentions are. Our intentions are very clear. We want to find savings in the education system. We want to find them outside of the classroom. We want to make sure that we share our funding in the province equitably.

I believe every member of our government is committed to those goals and we will work with boards who I believe are also committed to those goals, and we will reach agreements that achieve that. I would be more than pleased to stand up in this House and to say we had reached an agreement with the board in question, but we

have not, and so I cannot do that. But the day that we do, you can be assured that I will.

1430

The Speaker: New question, third party.

Mr Wildman: Can the minister indicate whether or not there was a memorandum of settlement signed on February 8, 1996, between himself and the chair of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board to take \$65 million of property taxes from the Metropolitan Toronto board to transfer to the provincial treasury?

Hon Mr Snobelen: There most certainly was an agreement in principle reached with the board. It was a conditional agreement, conditional on many factors. That agreement never came to fruition and so it was never in force, never has been in force. We do not have an agreement currently that exists with the board. If we do have such an agreement, I will be very proud to represent it in this House and to present it to all the members of this House.

Mr Wildman: When the minister introduced Bill 34 to the House, wouldn't it have been appropriate for him to have shared with the members of this House, the people of Metropolitan Toronto and the people of Ontario that this deal had been in place and that what was being proposed by legislative vehicle in Bill 34 was an attempt to get what he could not finalize through this deal, through negotiations as per Bill 34? Why is it you didn't tell everybody about this? Why did you keep it secret? Don't you believe in full public disclosure?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The honourable member opposite asks an interesting question. I want to reassure him that I have absolutely no intention of standing up in this House, now or ever, and announcing a deal I haven't arrived at.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a question for the Chairman of Management Board. Recent media reports indicate that OPSEU has passed a resolution calling for a fine to be levied against those workers who crossed the picket line during the strike and chose to work. Can he clarify the government's position regarding this issue and whether or not any government worker is going to have to pay this dreadful fine?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I thank the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for raising this question, because indeed several thousand members of OPSEU did cross the picket line during the strike, did go to work, exercised their right to work and were paid. Apparently a resolution has now been passed by the union which would have the possibility of fining the members having crossed the picket line the full pay they received. The government considers this to be in violation of the back-to-work protocol to the extent that it is published or made as public information.

I will assure the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale that the province of Ontario will not assist or will not condone or will not help in any way, shape or form the collection of this fee or this fine. The understanding I have is that the union will rely primarily on members

voluntarily paying the fine, and the information I have is that all of those members who have been contacted, who have been approached with regard to the paying of this fine, have rejected paying the fine. My understanding is that there is no enforcement mechanism that the union would have to insist on the payment of this fine.

Mr Hastings: My supplementary relates to what I would call a dreadful form of workplace harassment occurring here for those people who crossed the picket line and did go to work. Can the minister assure this House that those who exercised their right to work will not be subject to this kind of workplace harassment?

Hon David Johnson: I assure the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale that this government has taken every possible action to ensure that there is no harassment of any member as a result of this strike; it's this government's position that there should be no harassment, period, for whatever reason in the workplace. This government has made it clear that we will not in any way, shape or form participate in the collection of any such fine that the union may attempt to impose on those members who exercised their legal right to come to work and to cross the picket line.

The government considers this a time to let the strike be behind us. The healing process should take place now. I think it's most unfortunate that the union is apparently attempting to impose a fine on members for past action. Let's get on, let's get back together and let's work for the people of the province of Ontario.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You're given the charge of rectifying the property tax situation in Metro and the GTA, and as you're well aware, Metro taxpayers pay 100% of education through the property tax.

Before this Minister of Education and Training came up with the idea of dipping into Metro property taxes, did he consult with you whether it was a good idea to grab more property taxes out of Metro when you know that Metro is already paying, for instance, 40% more commercial-industrial taxes than people are paying outside of Metro? Do you think this property tax grab from a system that's in collapse was a good idea? Do you as the minister in charge of the property tax situation that's got to be rectified support this grab of \$65 million?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can assure the House and members across that members of this government always consult with each other. I think the actions that have been taken by this government in dealing with public school boards in Metro have been appropriate and fair, much fairer than the concentration tax that was imposed by your government right out of the tax base. Try and remember that one. How much money did you take out of the property tax base with that?

Mr Colle: Minister, you know that the situation in Metro is in crisis; you've said it's a crisis in taxation. Businesses are leaving because they can't afford the tax load, mostly as a result of paying for education. Very

simply and clearly, do you support the minister's request to dip into Metro property taxes? Did you think it was a good idea? Do you condone it and did you encourage him to go into this area? What advice did you give him?

Hon Mr Leach: I don't particularly like having to make cuts anywhere and I wish this government didn't have to do it. It wouldn't have to do it if we weren't in the mess we're in financially. When you're faced with \$10-billion deficits and \$100-million debts, you have to take whatever action is necessary. I think the actions that are being taken by this government are appropriate. The school boards have been very cooperative; the municipalities have been very cooperative. They know they want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem and they're cooperating with us.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. In view of his answers today, how do we know there isn't another deal already in place that he has signed that he hasn't acknowledged? Can the minister please tell us why he kept this agreement, which was signed on February 8, a secret?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I tell the honourable member again that we certainly intend to enter into an agreement with the two school boards involved. I've said that in the past. We do not have such an agreement today. When we do have such an agreement we will put it forward, and I assure the member opposite that we do not have and have not had such a deal. We have, to make it very clear again, entered into an agreement in principle that was very conditional. It expired before we could make it into an agreement and so we have no agreement now, have not had an agreement. But when we do, when we enter into that agreement, when because of negotiations with the school board, because of our common commitment to solving the problems that we have inherited in this province, we enter into such an agreement, I will table it proudly in this House. That is my intention.

Mr Wildman: In light of the minister's answers, because of the damage to his credibility and to the credibility of his government, is he now prepared to consider very seriously resigning his portfolio?

Hon Mr Snobelen: No.

1440

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a question for the Solicitor General. A week ago the Ontario Legislature passed a resolution urging the federal government to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada. Section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada allows individuals who have committed first-degree murder and who have been sentenced to jail for life, killers such as Clifford Olson, who will have a right to seek application for automatic parole this summer, to be set free. I'd like to ask the Solicitor General whether or not he supports this resolution.

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I appreciate the question and

I want to congratulate the member for Dufferin-Peel for introducing the legislation, which was supported by the majority of the members of the assembly last week. It's timely, it's important and it was fortunate we had an opportunity to debate it on the floor of this House.

Essentially, this section will allow convicted murderers to have their parole ineligibility periods reduced. Particularly of concern is that these are individuals who have been sentenced by a judge and jury to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 25 years. In response to the member, we very strongly endorse the resolution and once again congratulate the member for introducing it.

Mr Tilson: This morning in the media Justice Minister Rock announced that he intended to deal with this issue some time later in the spring. I must say I'm happy with the Solicitor General's response because I believe that when an individual is sentenced to 25 years in jail, for life, life means life, as was said by the Canadian Police Association advocates. I don't believe it's fair to have victims who have gone through a trial before, 15 years earlier, go through this situation again and relive their worst nightmares by giving victim impact statements to another jury at the time of an appeal.

I thank the Solicitor General for the support of my resolution. Since amendments to the Criminal Code must be made by the federal government, I would ask the Solicitor General what steps he intends to take to bring this resolution to the attention of the federal government.

Hon Mr Runciman: I'd advise the members of the House that following passage of the resolution, the Attorney General and I signed a letter to Justice Minister Rock endorsing the resolution, attaching a copy of the resolution and urging the federal government to act. We know, as the member mentioned, that there was some media comment this morning that Mr Rock and the federal government are contemplating some changes to the act. I want to indicate that section 745 is another one of those measures available to people who have committed crimes in this country to reap the benefit, if you will. It has upset people about the justice system. Canadians don't want tinkering; they want repeal of section 745. We urge Mr Rock and the federal government to take into consideration the interests of victims, the wishes of Canadians and put them very far ahead of the desires of convicted murderers.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Patten: The minister says, "Thank you for the opportunity."

Minister, I would be curious to know, given the model of the memorandum of settlement that you have signed with the Metropolitan Toronto School Board, whether this is the model that you are using or intend to use in terms of negotiations with the Ottawa Board of Education and if you might explain to us where those negotiations are at the moment.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to thank the honourable member opposite for the question. The memorandum, this agreement in principle, was conditional on many things. It was entered into back in February. This is a very different set of circumstances now. I suspect that the agreements that we reach with Ottawa or with Toronto—and we do intend to reach agreements with them; we intend to do that in a very open process, one in which we have very publicly stated our intentions and why, because we want to find savings outside of the classroom in our education system. We believe the boards are consistent with that.

Given that, I think that we will have those discussions, and we will probably use, as a template for the discussions, the agreements that were entered into under the previous government under the social contract to recover those social contract dollars, those permanent savings now, from the system. I would imagine that in our future negotiations, that beginning point or that template would be used. That would be my expectation.

Mr Patten: Thank you to the minister for not answering the question. My question was, where were you in negotiations at the moment and have you signed any arrangement? The information I have is that there are no discussions, that neither you nor any members of your ministry have been in touch with the Ottawa board and that there has not been any approach to arrive at how much you want. That's why I ask you, is this the model that you will use with the Ottawa board as well to extract taxpayers' money?

You are quite adept at skirting around the issue, and you keep referring to the social contract. That's half of the model, half of the deal; the other, of course, is the expenditure reduction targets. It was \$65 million for the Metro Toronto board and it's several million for the Ottawa board. I ask you again, is this the same model that you would use in order to get at the taxpayers' money from the Ottawa board as well?

Hon Mr Snobelen: If I can explain to the honourable member, we have a variety of discussions with the Ottawa board, as a ministry, on an ongoing basis. I would suspect that somewhere inside of the ministry someone is discussing operational matters with the Ottawa board on an ongoing basis. That's a function of the normal process.

Specifically about these types of agreements, there is certainly nothing going on between my office and the Ottawa board at the moment. Post-Bill 34, we intend to initiate those conversations and we hope to enter into an agreement with Ottawa. We certainly believe that that's possible. When we do, it will be responsible to the circumstances that we currently face. We will be attempting to find mechanisms to recover the permanent savings of the social contract, and we'll be asking the Ottawa board, as we asked the other boards in the province of Ontario, to find savings outside of the classroom.

Those operational savings, of course, have been mitigated by the recent actions of our government that are reflected in Bill 34, which will help to mitigate the effect of those operating costs. So in fact they won't be what might have been anticipated in February, because we have already taken steps to mitigate those operating cost recoveries.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have another question to the Minister of Education and Training. This minister began his career as minister by making a speech, a video was made of it, indicating that the way to change the education system was to manufacture a crisis. That became public.

We've just seen earlier this week that he entered into some kind of an arrangement with the Haliburton County Board of Education that was secret, and then that became public. As a result, he had to change the way he was operating on his cuts for a number of other boards in the province.

1450

Now, today, we find that the minister entered into a secret deal with the Metropolitan Toronto board of education on February 8 and now that has become public. At no stage in all this process has the minister ever publicly acknowledged these things. They've had to be made public by members of the opposition or dragged out of him. What is this penchant for secrecy and does the minister really believe this is the proper way to operate the public education system of this province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm a little disappointed, but the honourable member opposite has brought up in his question today some comments I made very early on, in not only my time as a minister but my time as an MPP. Those remarks I apologized for at the time. If necessary, I apologize for them again today. I thought at the time they could be misconstrued and I did apologize for them. I will again today. But I want to assure the member opposite there's nothing manufactured about a \$100-billion debt in this province, and this government is being responsible for it.

Mr Wildman: The minister may have apologized but his behaviour hasn't changed, and every action he's taken since he became minister has borne out what he predicted and said had to be done in that secret speech to his bureaucrats right after he was appointed. This minister has consistently obfuscated, this minister has consistently misled the public and the members of this House and for that reason I call on him to resign.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the honourable leader of the third party if he will withdraw those comments.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, with regret, I do not withdraw.

The Speaker: Then I have no alternative but to name the honourable member for Algoma. I would ask him to leave the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I ask the member, did I hear you say you withdraw it?

Mr Wildman: No, I said I would not withdraw.

The Speaker: Then I have no alternative but to name the honourable member. Would the Sergeant at Arms take the honourable member out.

Mr Wildman was escorted from the chamber.

SEWAGE AND STORM WATER TUNNEL

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): My question this afternoon is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. As the minister will know, for some years the people of High Park-Swansea and indeed of Parkdale, the communities particularly adjacent to Lake Ontario in the west end of the city of Toronto, have been really concerned about the water quality in the western beaches. For years, they pleaded with the provincial government to give relief and to provide assistance, particularly in the way of approvals for the western beaches storm tunnel.

The requests from our communities fell on deaf ears under the Peterson government, again on to deaf ears from the Rae government, have finally received approval from this government, and now we'd like to have some accounting of what is the status of that tunnel.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I'm most happy to answer the question for my colleague from High Park-Swansea. We're pleased to note that from a provincial perspective this project has met the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act. We believe this is a good project to improve the water quality and the beach quality of that area and it is an opportunity to create jobs as well.

To my colleague, I am informed that Industry Canada is in fact reviewing, in effect finalizing its review of the project as required under the federal environmental assessment and review system. Our understanding is that they will deliver an environmental decision probably some time in late May and hopefully with a finalized funding decision in June.

Mr Shea: That confirms a fear we have—and I want to pick up on that in fact—about the process. You may recall, Minister, that after protracted studies, the city of Toronto had requested the construction of the western beaches tunnel. After considerable study and great financial investment, the Metropolitan Toronto council asked for exactly the same thing. Then your ministry proceeded through a very expensive and protracted environmental study. It has been completed and the government has given approval to it, and now we hear that the federal government may very well try to intervene by doing another environmental assessment.

Is that the case? Can you assure this House that you're trying to bring some sanity to this, advise the federal government—all of the studies have been done—there's no need to get into an area of jurisdiction that is none of their business, and not duplicate the cost already experienced by the taxpayers? Can you speak to that, Minister?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Again to my colleague from High Park-Swansea, I appreciate his frustration. He is quite right, this project has undergone a number of assessments and is still not completed in this long, protracted process.

This project will receive its funding under the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program. When the provincial government gives its approval, a federal assessment is then triggered, and that is what is undergoing now. He is quite right that it is another process. We hope that having received provincial assurance it meets our environmental concerns, it will be treated expeditiously, and we have every indication that will be the case.

I can tell him that from my perspective as the chair of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, the issue of harmonization is one with which we are concerned in Ontario. We are working to improve this process, and others, to increase the harmonization and to decrease the duplication and overlap that does occur in such processes.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF INFORMATION AND
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Thomas Wright, current Information and Privacy Commissioner, to act as interim Information and Privacy Commissioner until April 30, 1997,

"And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker."

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Agreed? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I move that the standing committee on social development be authorized to meet on the morning of Wednesday, May 1, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 30, the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, and Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I move that notwithstanding any standing order or previous order of the House, the following changes be made to the order of precedence for private members' public business: ballot item 31, Mr Gilchrist; ballot item 37, Mrs Ecker; ballot item 91, Mr Vankoughnet.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Does the House agree? Agreed.

1500

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Pursuant to standing order 55, on behalf of the government House leader, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of April 29, 1996.

On Monday, April 29, we will continue with second reading of Bill 39, the Ontario Highway Transport Board and Public Vehicles Amendment Act.

On Tuesday, April 30, we will begin second reading of Bill 38, the Toronto Islands Amendment Act.

On Wednesday, May 1, we will continue with any unfinished business from Tuesday, after which we will begin second reading of Bill 36, An Act to amend certain acts administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

For Thursday morning's private members' public business, we will consider ballot item number 25, standing in the name of the member for Brampton South, and ballot item number 26, standing in the name of the member for Oakwood.

On the afternoon of Thursday, May 2, we will continue with any unfinished business from the week.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): This morning the clergy and laity of the newly formed downtown church coalition in my riding of Fort York held a press conference, the purpose of which was to present a petition to the Premier, and it was signed by 16,000 members from 20 downtown churches. It reads:

"We are concerned that recent cuts to social services, ie, housing, food and welfare, are causing severe hardship for many people. While we believe that decreasing the deficit is important, we're not in favour of achieving this goal if it adversely affects the poorest people of our society.

"As followers of Jesus, we share his calling to bring good news to the poor and to speak out on behalf of society's most vulnerable people.

"We therefore ask you to forgo the tax cut that you've promised us and instead restore social service support for the poor."

I support this petition.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by several people from Metropolitan Toronto to the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the proposed income tax cut referred to in the Conservative campaign document known as the Common Sense Revolution will necessitate drastic and rapid cuts to important services to the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the proposed tax cut will shift the tax obligation for the people of Ontario from the progressive income tax, which takes into account a person's ability to pay, to the regressive property taxes and user fees which do not take into account an individual's ability to pay and are most onerous for people with modest incomes; and

"Whereas the proposed income tax cut will benefit the most wealthy and privileged in our society and deny the provincial government revenue to maintain a high-quality health care and education system and other essential services; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario will have to borrow over \$20 billion to finance the proposed tax cut and will add over \$20 billion to the provincial debt in doing so;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to postpone its 30% income tax cut until such time as the provincial budget is balanced and the deficit no longer exists."

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with its contents.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario which reads:

"Whereas the Minister of Education and Training has gone on record stating that the government is deeply committed to an educational system that delivers excellence; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is cutting funding support for elementary and secondary education by \$400 million; and

"Whereas by reducing grants to boards such as MSSB, which can be shown to be well under the targeted expenditure level for administration and operational support, the minister has penalized the very boards which have been extremely prudent and frugal in their non-classroom spending; and

"Whereas the so-called equalization payments are indirect taxation without representation because there is no guarantee they will be used to offset reductions in educational transfer,

"We, the undersigned residents of North York, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure any reduction to expenditure levels are implemented in a fair and equitable manner to both grant-dependent and negative-grant-position school boards."

I will affix my signature to that.

ABORTION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition signed by over 500 citizens of Cambridge which reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, humbly pray and call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop abortion funding, to give expectant mothers pertinent information and to assist women with problem pregnancies through pregnancy to the birth of their baby."

ALZHEIMER RESPITE CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition from several people in the Niagara region which reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Niagara region has one of the highest per capita populations of seniors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Niagara region ranks 32nd out of 38 health regions in long-term-care funding and that more individuals wait for support services from the March of Dimes than those who are actually served by it; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's patients who critically depend on support services in order to cope in a more humane way with this devastating illness continue to suffer from unacceptable delays in receiving respite care; and

"Whereas more than half of all Ontario families waiting for Alzheimer-related respite care reside in the Niagara area;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to adopt the plan by the Niagara Regional District Health Council which would help improve the way vulnerable people are treated in the Niagara area."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in agreement with its contents.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions to the Minister of Health, the Legislative Assembly and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system,

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I continue to support these petitions.

RENT REGULATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Another petition to the Ontario Legislature, to Premier Mike Harris, Minister Al Leach and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document; and

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system; and

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants of Ontario; and

"Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished; and

"Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I attach my signature also.

1510

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects for Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency, and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it's committed to ensuring that a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas the Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my signature to this petition.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Labour, and the Legislature of the province of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to your government's proposed changes to Ontario's workers' compensation system, including elimination of the bipartite board of directors; reduced temporary benefits; introduction of the three-day period from the time of injury with no pay; legislated limits on entitlement, thereby excluding repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims from eligibility for compensation; reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements.

"Workers' compensation is not a handout; it is an insurance plan for which premiums are paid; it is a legal obligation that employers have to employees, who 80 years ago traded their right to sue employers in return for this insurance plan.

"We therefore demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent injuries, no reduction in current Workers' Compensation Board staff levels and that the bipartite board structure be left intact."

I attach my signature also.

COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, the people of Windsor, Ontario, feel the Honourable Mike Harris is incompetent and incapable of running a responsible government;

"Whereas we, the people of Windsor, Ontario, feel that the Honourable Mike Harris has gone too far in his mandate of slashing agency funding;

"Whereas he has broken his promise not to hurt the elderly and the disabled;

"Whereas the Honourable Mike Harris has broken his promise to meet with Mayor Mike Hurst, city of Windsor, with regard to obtaining the city of Windsor's 10% share of Casino Windsor's profits in order to offset these cuts;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask the Premier to resign."

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "To the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed income tax cut referred to in the Conservative campaign document known as the Common Sense Revolution will necessitate drastic and rapid cuts to important services to the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the proposed tax cut will shift the tax obligation for the people of Ontario from progressive income tax, which takes into account a person's ability to pay, to regressive property taxes and user fees, which do not take into account an individual's ability to pay, and are most onerous for people with modest incomes; and

"Whereas the proposed income tax cut will benefit the most wealthy and privileged in our society and deny the provincial government revenue to maintain a high-quality health care and education system and other essential services; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario will have to borrow over \$20 billion to finance the proposed tax cut and

will add over \$20 billion to the provincial debt in doing so;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to postpone its 30% income tax cut until such time as the provincial budget is balanced and the deficit no longer exists."

I affix my signature to this petition.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by a number of individuals in Ontario. It reads:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wine and thereby contributes immensely to the grape-growing and wine production industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits over to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in agreement with its contents.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have another petition addressed to the assembly.

"Whereas the proposed income tax cut referred to in the Conservative campaign document known as the Common Sense Revolution will necessitate drastic and rapid cuts to important services to the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the proposed tax cut will shift the tax obligation for the people of Ontario from the progressive income tax, which takes into account a person's ability to pay, to regressive property taxes and user fees, which do not take into account an individual's ability to pay and are most onerous for people on modest incomes;

"Whereas the proposed income tax cut will benefit the most wealthy and privileged in our society and deny the provincial government revenue to maintain a high-quality health care and education system and other essential services;

"Whereas the government of Ontario will have to borrow over \$20 billion to finance the proposed tax cut and will add over \$20 billion to the provincial debt in doing so;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to postpone its 30% income tax cut until such time as the provincial budget is balanced and the deficit no longer exists."

This, of course, makes eminent sense and therefore I will affix my signature.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr Speaker, I would like to inform the House that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor awaits to give royal assent.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took his seat upon the throne.

1523

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

Hon Henry N.R. Jackman (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present sittings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 42, An Act to reform MPPs' pensions, to eliminate tax-free allowances and to adjust MPPs' compensation levels / *Projet de loi 42, Loi portant réforme du régime de retraite des députés, éliminant les allocations non imposables et rajustant les niveaux de rétribution des députés*

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Election Act / *Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale*

Bill Pr50, An Act respecting the Town of Milton

Bill Pr53, An Act respecting the Association of Ontario Road Superintendents

Bill Pr56, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur sanctionne ces projets de loi.

The Speaker: May it please Your Honour, we, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario in session assembled, approach Your Honour with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government and humbly beg to present for Your Honour's acceptance a bill entitled An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1996.

Clerk of the House: His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accept their benevolence and assent to this bill in Her Majesty's name.

Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur remercie les bons et loyaux sujets de Sa Majesté, accepte leur bien-

veillance et sanctionne ce projet de loi au nom de Sa Majesté.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HIGHWAY TRANSPORT BOARD AND PUBLIC VEHICLES AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DES TRANSPORTS ROUTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET LA LOI SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Resuming the adjourned debate on motion for second reading of Bill 39, An Act to amend the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act and the Public Vehicles Act and to make consequential changes to certain other Acts / *Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission des transports routiers de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun et apportant des modifications corrélatives à certaines autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Oshawa had the floor.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): To continue what I was saying yesterday about the public concerns, I'd like now to bring up some of the other issues on the public concerns.

Some people have expressed concerns about deregulation. Recently a group called the Freedom to Move Coalition spoke out, and I'd like to take a moment to address some of those specific concerns.

First I'd like to go back to something I mentioned briefly at the outset yesterday, that is, that this government is committed to eliminating red tape and reducing the regulatory burden of private sector companies. If we continue to impose economic regulations on the intercity bus industry, we are creating barriers to job creation, economic growth and investment in this province.

Furthermore, as the Honourable Al Palladini, Minister of Transportation, mentioned yesterday, while the government would allow the bus industry to operate according to market forces, we will continue to impose and enforce safety. That means vehicle, driver and industry safety.

The intercity bus industry is the last transportation mode in Canada with market entry control, yet scheduled services have steadily declined for many years. Clearly, a change is warranted for both the industry and its passengers.

This government believes that the travelling public will be better served by a competitive industry in which entrepreneurs can be innovative and creative in meeting passenger needs. For instance, some companies may choose to use smaller vehicles to service smaller communities rather than using full-sized motor coaches. They may end up providing a more appropriate level of service than what exists right now.

The ministry has received positive feedback from many local entrepreneurs who have expressed interest in taking over routes in areas where companies do not have the flexibility to service.

The members opposite constantly mention what could happen. It's a fact that several hundred communities in Ontario have lost scheduled bus service just over the last 10 years; plus, in other communities scheduled services are so infrequent that they no longer meet the needs of the local residents.

As I mentioned earlier, I am convinced that deregulation will stimulate local businesses to provide these services. In many cases these days, bus companies only offer scheduled services because regulations require them to do so before they can obtain charter rights.

I am also convinced that Ontario's towns and villages will actively encourage friends, neighbours and local entrepreneurs to provide the transportation services needed by their fellow residents. In this respect, deregulation should give smaller companies an opportunity to get started. These smaller companies will provide a direct stimulus to their local economies by employing local residents and buying local goods and services.

This government is working with the intercity bus industry. Together we have developed an effective plan and time frame to ensure an orderly transition to deregulation on January 1, 1998. Under the interim regulatory system, bus companies that want to get out of the business will have to work with the province's smaller communities and rural areas to help develop workable alternatives.

This government firmly believes that the travelling public will be better and more appropriately served by moving from controlled market entry to a competitive environment.

Before I conclude today, I'd like to point out that the federal government is also interested in deregulating the intercity bus industry, and we will work with them to encourage other provinces to do so.

Other countries, like the UK and the United States, removed industry restrictions more than 10 years ago, and here in Ontario the intercity bus industry has accepted the challenge of a competitive market, recognizing that deregulation will happen and it's only a matter of time.

Deregulation will lead to an effective system that provides appropriate levels of service based on market demand and the needs of the travelling public.

Deregulation will encourage innovation among current and potential operators, which will ensure a viable and healthy intercity bus industry.

Finally, deregulation will get government out of the way of the business and let them do what they do best: create jobs, stimulate the economy and invest in Ontario's future.

1530

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm pleased to be able to participate in the debate that's taking place here today. I had yesterday a list of virtually all of the communities in Ontario that might be affected by this, but I have been unable to put my hands on it this afternoon. I know that will greatly disappoint members of the assembly, because I had it yesterday. Mr Conway, the member for Renfrew North, had this list, which was rather substantial, in his office. I will share, however, with some of the members some of the communities that might be in jeopardy as a result of this legislation.

I am speaking in opposition to this bill, although there are some people who believe that on balance they would support it. I respect the people who have that point of view; I simply do not agree with it in this specific case. This is not to suggest that the circumstances we face as of today, late April 1996, are perfect in terms of the bus industry, but I don't think this legislation, nor do I think complete deregulation, will solve the problem.

This essentially is a piece of legislation that will affect smaller towns. I suspect the service to St Catharines, which I represent, will be virtually unaffected by this. One might say, if one wanted to be totally parochial, "Why would you worry about the rest of the province?" That's not a hard question to answer, because we are elected to represent our own constituencies but to deal with matters which relate to the entire province of Ontario.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): You do care.

Mr Bradley: I do care, as the member for Etobicoke West understands and agrees, and I don't think deregulation will help these communities in terms of retaining service or getting new service.

Let me go back, if I may, to a circumstance that arose in the early 1980s to the mid-1980s related to Greyhound and Gray Coach Lines and the competition they were going to have in terms of delivering service from Toronto to Niagara Falls, with a stop in St Catharines, or it could go right through to Buffalo in this case, to an American city. That was a rather lucrative route, and for that reason Greyhound was interested in that route and it wanted to compete with Gray Coach. But Gray Coach had an obligation to service other communities—I believe Owen Sound was one of them—so there was some considerable onus on Gray Coach to deliver this service. They had a social obligation, if you will. By having the right to have a transportation route between Toronto and Buffalo, they were also obligated to travel elsewhere in the province.

Greyhound did not want to do this initially. Greyhound wanted to have only the most lucrative of services. This is the way the circumstances existed. I'm not being critical of Gray Coach or Greyhound or anyone in this regard; I'm simply pointing out what the circumstances were. There was an agreement reached between Greyhound and Gray Coach for services, and that worked out amicably and communities were served. I think we're going to see a lot more of those situations if you simply allow the private companies to skim the cream off the top of the milk. That's exactly what then is going to happen.

I've seen deregulation in other areas. In some cases it has its benefits, in some cases its detriments. In the airline industry we've seen deregulation and it's had a mixed result. It has in some circumstances brought the prices down; in other circumstances it has limited the amount of service available to others who are in smaller communities.

We've already seen what is referred to as a rationalization—that means a cut—of services in terms of our national railways. Both CN and CP, and there are some provincial railways which have also restricted service, all of these have restricted some services to communities that they used to serve.

This is so essential for those communities. Those who represent rural and small-town and village Ontario probably are more cognizant of this than I, though when I have taken the bus from Toronto to St Catharines and vice versa, sometimes it stops in places such as Grimsby, it stops in Hamilton, which is a larger community, and Oakville and others.

Mr Stockwell: You may be taking a ride in the bus, but I'm not sure you're taking—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order, the member for Etobicoke West.

Mr Bradley: I know the member for Etobicoke West is very interested in what I have to say and will be watching on television now, I'm sure.

So some of those communities will not receive that service, in my view, if we go through with deregulation.

I lament the loss of train service or the restriction of train service, which I've seen happen across this country. I think our GO Transit, which was established by the Davis government, has provided some good service for people. There have been some cutbacks in that regard, but it has provided some good service.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Great management.

Mr Bradley: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing tells me there was great management there, and I would have to take his word for that because he is knowledgeable in this field, and I know it's the kind of service that those of us in urban areas look forward to.

There are a lot of people, however, who don't have that option, and with the price of gas constantly going up—and I can't think of anyone in this Legislature who is happy with the price of gasoline in this province at this time—with that rise in gasoline prices, with the increase in the rates for automobile insurance, it really means that more and more people are going to have to be in a position where they take the bus.

The bus has often served people who are in lower-income categories: often students, for instance, who have had to use that and don't have an option. They don't have a car of their own. So when they're travelling from a small community to another place, to university or something, they have been compelled, because they don't have a vehicle, to take the bus. They didn't have the option of an airplane, because they didn't have the kind of funds necessary. They didn't have the option of the railway, because the railway lines are gone in many of the communities. They cannot own a car and operate a car, so the option that's available to those people is going to be the option of the bus.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Take the bus.

Mr Bradley: I say to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale that I have taken the bus on many occasions and I've enjoyed taking the bus in this province. But I think if you look at where subsidization occurs, there seems to be little reluctance to subsidize airports, particularly in major urban centres, and we do subsidize GO Transit in the Metropolitan Toronto and surrounding area, the greater Toronto area, but somehow we don't seem to want to subsidize or provide some service that may cost

others in the province a little bit of money when it comes to the smaller towns and villages.

I think they are as deserving as anybody else, even though under the changes that the Premier has announced there will be fewer rural seats in this province, far fewer rural seats and northern seats, because he wants to reduce to 103 seats. So some of us who are in the urban areas will have to speak for those in the rural areas, because there are going to be fewer members of provincial Parliament from those areas.

I want to go back to the price of gasoline, because I think that affects a lot of people. At one time, people could drive what you would call clunkers, the old cars many of us had at the beginning. They would have a hard time today meeting safety tests, because there are safety requirements, and I'm in full agreement with the Ministry of Transportation in that regard. But that does mean it costs some money. It also means that now that we have compulsory insurance in the province for people driving vehicles, and because of the way the insurance system is set up, that people could easily go into the Facility Association if they have just a couple of tickets, it really means we're in a circumstance where it's getting less affordable to be able to drive a private vehicle. That means that bus service is going to be even more important.

When I look at the price of gasoline, the base price in our area—the northern members will say, "You'll never catch up to us," because they think it's a bargain, what we used to get, or even what we get today.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): It's 71 cents in Red Lake.

Mr Bradley: Someone has told me 71 cents a litre was the price of gasoline in Red Lake, for instance. In southern Ontario, generally it has been bottoming out somewhere around 48 cents a litre. Well, now it's bottoming out somewhere around 56 or 57 cents a litre. In Metro I've seen it as high as over 60 cents a litre, and in St Catharines.

1540

While the news media don't appear to be very interested in this in terms of if you ask a question in the Legislature or make a statement in the Legislature—their eyes seem to glaze over as we ask these questions—we all know as people who represent people in our communities that one of the things they talk about an awful lot, particularly where they're reliant on vehicles as almost their sole way of getting around from one place to another, is they will certainly tell you about the price of gasoline.

I'm here to speak on behalf of those people who are going to be adversely affected by deregulation of the bus industry. It appears to me—I could be wrong; I always put that out there, that I could be wrong—that the government is ideologically committed to deregulating and ideologically committed to getting the government out of virtually everything. I understand that and that's a point of view one has to accept in our society. I don't happen to agree with it and it certainly doesn't fit with the point of view I remember in previous Conservative governments that sat in this chamber and ruled this government for some 42 years previous to 1985.

I ask the gas companies and their executives how they could possibly look in the mirror and accept what is going on in this province in terms of gas pricing. That's why we need bus service in so many communities.

Let me look at what happened when deregulation took place in the United States. I know a lot of people on the other side of the House really think Ronald Reagan was the best thing since sliced bread; however, not everybody does, but some people do. When he deregulated buses in 1982—he signed a bill which would deregulate the bus industry in the United States—there were 11,820 cities and towns which were served by bus service. The number of US cities and towns with bus service after deregulation, and I'm going back to 1991, it's probably even fewer now, ended up being 5,690. Let's say that's about half: Approximately half the number of communities were served after deregulation.

Yes, it meant an ideological commitment. Mr Reagan believed government should get out of most things and he was opposed to regulation. However, the effect on small towns and small cities in the United States was that they lost the service. That's what I worry about if we embark upon this.

You can say that if another government gets elected or if this government thinks that was wrong, whoever it is can change it. Once you lose those services, it's very hard to get them back. Once the national and provincial railways cut their services, you really didn't see them restored. They seemed to go away for some period of time. I think that is detrimental for us. The percentage decrease in the number of stops in the United States between 1982 and 1991 was a 52% drop in the number of stops buses made. The stops abandoned by Greyhound USA in the first year of deregulation, for instance, was 1,300 immediately.

I worry about this because I worry about places such as Actinolite, Atikokan, Alliston, Alton, Angus, Apsley, Armstrong, Arthur, Aylmer, Baldwin, Bailieboro, Ballantrae, Bancroft, Barry's Bay, Beaverton, Beeton, Berkeley, Bewdley, Bismarck, Blackstock, Blind River, Bothwell, Bracebridge, Brentwood, Brown Hill, Brooklin, Brunner, Burk's Falls, Burleigh Falls, Canadian Forces Base Borden, Carleton Place, Canboro, Cameron, Camilla, Cayuga, Chapleau, Chatsworth, Chelsea, Clifford, Cobocok, Cochrane, Collingwood, Columbus, Combermere, Craighleith, Creemore, Delhi, Dorking, Dornoch, Dundalk, Dunnville, Durham, Eganville, Elfrida, Elmwood, Elmvale, Elora, Espanola, Essex, Fenelon Falls, Fergus, Flesherton, Fort Frances, Fowlers Corners, Frasersville, Fulton, Gads Hill, Geraldton, Gorrie, Grand Valley, Gravenhurst, Greenock, Greenbank, Grimsby, Haliburton, Hanover, Harrison, Havelock, Hawkesbury, Hearst, Heidelberg, Holland Centre, Huntsville, Ignace, Ingoldsby, Iron Bridge, Iroquois Falls, Jarvis, Kaladar, Kapuskasing, Killaloe Station, Kincardine, Kingsville, Kirkland Lake, Lakefield, Leamington, Lindsay, Linwood, Listowel, Maberly, Madoc, Manilla, Manchester, Maple Leaf, Marmora, Markdale, Massey, Maynooth, Meaford, Melbourne, Mildmay, Millbank, Myrtle;

Nestleton, Neustadt, Newton, Norland, Norwood, Oakwood, Omemee, Owen Sound, Palgrave, Paudash, Pfefferlaw, Perth, Port Colborne, Port Dover, Port Bolster,

Port Perry, Powassan, Raglan, Red Lake, Rosedale, St Clements, St Thomas, Saintfield, Sarnia, Sharbot Lake, Shelburne, Simcoe, Smithville, Smooth Rock Falls, South River, Stayner, Strathroy, Sunderland, Sundridge, Sutton, Thamesville, Thornbury, Tilbury, Tillsonburg, Timmins, Tottenham, Trout Creek, Tweed, Upsala, Vermilion Bay, Virginia, Walkerton, Wallaceburg, Wardsville, Wasaga Beach, Wawa, Wheatley, Williamsford, Wilno, Wingham, Woodview and Wroxeter.

Those are some of the communities which have been in danger. This is where it says your bus could be gone. All these are communities that could be affected, and there could be more, but I don't want to bore the members of the Legislature with any more.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): What about Arnprior? *Interjection.*

Mr Bradley: Arnprior, Nepean, Lanark, and I could name more. However, the member for Etobicoke West appropriately said that the debate should continue on without listing. I want to bow to his advice and continue on with other arguments to be made.

Let's look at what we subsidize. Usually it's people who have more money who can afford to fly, particularly at the last minute, because they have to book well ahead to fly at a lower rate in our province and our country. It's interesting that you can fly, I'm told, to Florida for less money than you can fly to Sudbury or Ottawa, as the member for Nepean appropriately says.

We have some kind of subsidization that exists in terms of air travel, we have some, as I've mentioned, with GO Transit, and I'm pleased to see that—all of us who know of the greater Toronto area—we have roads which are subsidized, though heaven knows, if you've been driving on them, if they've been paved lately, because there are potholes in the potholes. However, the buses seem to be able to negotiate those better than individual vehicles. I want to look as well at the fact that these buses seem to keep us together. This kind of transportation helps to keep us together as a province. It keeps communication going.

1550

I was reading an excellent article on this and I'll share part of it with members of the assembly, "Deregulation Threatens Rural Bus Routes," that was before us just a short while ago. It was datelined Leamington. It reads as follows:

"The Greyhound bus is called the Scenicruiser 2. And on the four-hour milk run to Windsor from London, it lives up to its name.

"The motor coach meanders through the towns of rural Ontario—Wardsville, Bothwell, Thamesville—and past the variety stores and hardware outlets that double as bus stops.

"This bus isn't in a hurry and neither are its passengers; for those travelling off the beaten path, they have no choice.

"Back in seat 16, 68-year-old Bill Kett passes the time talking about bus travel and the need for routes just like this one.

"We have to keep our buses," he says, pumping his fist defiantly in the air. "I don't pray much, but I'll pray these buses stay on."

"Kett, who lives near the small town of Wheatley, boards the bus a couple of times a week for the 80-minute ride to Windsor to visit relatives and see his doctor.

"What has Kett so worried is Ontario's plan to deregulate the bus industry, a move he says could leave him and other rural travellers stranded at the bus stop.

"Under new legislation announced Thursday"—that's last Thursday—"by Transportation Minister Al Palladini, economic regulations will come off the bus industry as of Jan. 1, 1998, allowing companies to decide fares and routes without provincial approval.

"The Ontario Highway Transport Board will continue to regulate the industry in the interim, overseeing the licensing of bus companies, hearing disputes between carriers and appeals. But its work has been cut back, staff laid off and its costs will now be recovered from the industry.

"The government insists bus safety will not be compromised. Companies starting service will be inspected and have to undergo a yearly...audit.

"But there are fears that removing the regulations will be the end of the road for many rural routes."

Some of the people who are affected, it goes on to say in the article, "Those affected, they say, will include small-town businesses that use the buses to deliver parcels, seniors, students and rural residents who rely on the routes as their link to the cities.

"You can look at a map of Ontario and see the big cities and those are the places that will get the service. Who the hell can run a bus through Woodstock for three passengers?" said Bill Noddle of Local 1415 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, representing Greyhound drivers.

"But some riders could be winners." That's what happens under deregulation: Some can win and some can lose. But I'm very much afraid that we're going to see many people who don't have the voice in this Legislature that they should have or simply because of representation by population, which we all accept, they don't have as many voices in the Legislature as they once had.

So when I look at this deregulation, the people who try to sell it are people like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in Britain. When you examine what has really happened in those places, you see that the more disadvantaged people are those who are not the winners. That is something that all of us must take into consideration: There are a lot of people in the province who may well be able to afford a vehicle and to operate that vehicle; there are many who cannot. This is a lifeline to so many of those communities. It is important to the business in those communities. It's important to the actual viability, the future viability, and the existence of those communities to have those transportation routes available.

I mentioned potholes in the road. It's much more difficult for people in vehicles, individual cars that is, to deal with the potholes than the buses. The buses have a hard enough time with them but, because of the way they're constructed, are able a little bit better to negotiate through these potholes which so adversely affect the cars.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is an important issue around bus deregulation. The House does not have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate the opportunity to continue. I'm happy to see my good friend the father, the priest, of the House who is with us this afternoon, Father Shea, who is here—

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Bless you, my son.

Mr Bradley: —and who has given us his blessing this afternoon by being in the House. Just for his purpose and for the purpose of members of the House, I want to look at another article that appeared on deregulation and help to provide that additional information to members of the House.

This article is by Daniel Girard and it is entitled, "Small-town Bus Service Said Doomed by Tory Cuts." I don't know if the article's necessarily going to reflect that, but we'll see as we get into it. It reads as follows, and I think it certainly fits this debate:

"An estimated 170 small and remote Ontario communities will lose their intercity bus service under a transportation ministry scheme to deregulate the industry, says a group fighting the move.

"It's almost completely negative for small-town Ontario," said Tom Parkin of Freedom to Move, a coalition of trade unions, seniors groups and university students.

"Parkin...yesterday unveiled a report claiming thousands of people will be stranded and ticket prices will soar on less-travelled routes when the Progressive Conservatives deregulate the industry. The claim of loss of service to at least 170 communities was based on interviews with bus company operators.

"University students and seniors on tight budgets will be especially hard hit because they have no alternative to bus travel, Heather Bishop, the chairperson of the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Federation of Students, told a news conference.

"As part of \$772 million in provincial government cuts announced last month, the transportation ministry vowed to scrap the Ontario Highway Transport Board at the end of the fiscal year, next March 31."

That allows me to discuss why we are cutting the transport board. It's just another example of trying to finance the tax cut. Every time we see an unnecessary cut taking place, we know it's to feed the tax cut, a tax cut the Ontario government will have to borrow over \$20 billion to finance, with \$5 billion of that involving interest to be paid.

Mr Stockwell: What do the teachers think?

Mr Bradley: I know my friend from Etobicoke West has expressed his genuine concern about this. Like the member for Wellington, who referred to this tax cut as reckless, I think in his heart of hearts he knows this is not the time to proceed with this tax cut. The member does not deny it and I have never heard him deny it. He's an honest and upright person most of the time, so I don't think he would do that.

What we have in Ontario then—and my friend the member for St Catharines-Brock is in the House and I know he would want to see bus service in Niagara-on-the-Lake and in Virgil—

Mr Colle: Grimsby.

Mr Bradley: Well, Grimsby's the other side. That's the member for Lincoln. Certainly he would want to see that and the other communities he represents that may be just a little smaller than people know about—I know he would be very concerned about that. I see him nodding. He's either nodding in agreement or nodding off, one of the two, but with my monotone voice, I suspect it might be the latter.

Anyway, I hope the government takes a second look at this. This, I am informed by the assistants to some of the ministers, is something that is interim. This is because there is chaos out there, I am told. I don't know whether that's true or not, but I am told that is the case and the real deregulation will take place in a couple of years.

I was one who counselled others who were contemplating deregulation of the truck industry that it could be fraught with some considerable problems, and indeed it was. We have not seen the shakeout or shakedown from that particular addition as yet.

Every time you look at deregulation, all I would suggest is that you take a careful look at it, that you not simply head into this because some of the gurus of the party—I'm not saying the people elected here—some of the people who advise the Premier most closely and are so far to the right that they would make some of the people on the other side in this chamber look like Red Tories, some of those people would—

Mr Hastings: I resent that.

Mr Bradley: Even the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, compared to some of the people who advise the Premier, may be seen to be a moderate and a Red Tory. He says not, but even that's a possibility.

I implore the members of the government caucus to go back to Mr Palladini, the Minister of Transportation, and suggest that he take a little more time to look at the ramifications of this, because no impact studies have been done. My colleague the member for Oakwood pointed that out the other day in the House. He said they're rushing headlong into this legislative initiative and they're doing so without the kind of impact studies previous governments, such as the Davis government, used to undertake before they embarked upon rash decisions. They were genuinely Conservative, they were genuinely cautious, and I implore this present class of 1996 to do the same.

1600

Mr Stockwell: I would like to comment on the speech made by my friend the member for St Catharines. As usual, he has assembled a little bit of information and turned it into a half-an-hour speech. I enjoyed most of the comments that he made. I think there are a couple of things we should be putting on the record, though. The regulation part of this industry has frustrated opportunities for people to get into this industry, to offer services to the communities about the province of Ontario, because the regulations are so difficult and onerous and marginal in some cases. I believe firmly that by removing

regulations to some degree you're going to give opportunities to private sector employers and people who want to operate smaller, more efficient specific areas to get into the business and provide these services on a smaller basis without regulation. They will be given an opportunity to succeed and employ people as well.

The other concern is that with regulations come incredible amounts of bureaucratic red tape. You can't provide this kind of overseeing, this kind of administration, without building up a big bureaucracy. The bureaucracy to approve, limit, change regulations towards certain buses and bus lines and dropping certain areas and enlarging others, is very regulatory. It's very administratively burdened and it is sinking in red tape much of the time. What does that mean? That means they cannot be timely when it comes to making decisions that are necessary for public consumption with respect to needs and services in this industry.

I'll close simply by saying this is 70 years we've had these kinds of regulations. I think there has to be, at minimum, a review of these regulations, with an idea of dropping them to allow the private sector to move in and operate what I would consider efficient, more effective services for the communities.

Mr Colle: To put this in perspective, initially the ministry had advocated complete deregulation and was going to go cold turkey into deregulation. They found out, in talking to people in the industry, that they couldn't do it, so this bill basically is continued regulation.

Those of you on the other side who stand up and say this is about deregulating, you're voting for regulation, but it's regulation without appeal. You cannot appeal the decision of the board now. You can't go to the Divisional Court, you cannot even go to the cabinet; you could before. It restricts people in the industry. It is an attempt to do something that is supposed to adjust an industry, and they've done it without an impact study. In other words, they don't know what they're getting into, because they haven't consulted.

This bill has no effect but to cause a lot of consternation with all the potential customers who want to use buses, who don't know whether they're going to lose stops or not, and everybody in the industry is totally confused on what the intentions of this government are. Private sector entrepreneurs are against this bill for both reasons. They don't know what the government's intentions are. It's a totally botched-up bill that has caused nothing but confusion because they've done it without any analysis or without independent impact studies. This bill is nothing but a back-door attempt at deregulation that's causing nothing but confusion.

Mr Ouellette: A couple of points need to be brought forward. The member for St Catharines mentioned GO Transit, although he failed to mention the fact that the taxpayer was subsidizing certain riders on certain trains up to \$5,000 per rider per year. What took place there was that the situation was reassessed, amalgamations were made, and it ended up saving the province, the taxpayer, almost half a million dollars on ridership alone, the point being that there is restructuring taking place and people are still satisfied. Service is still provided. The same thing is taking place in the bus industry.

A further comment: The fact is that we're looking at 1998 for this. This gives opportunities for input, to study and actually see what's taking place, just as the minister stated in August. He stated this in August. I have to correct the one member. It was stated in August that that's what was going to take place, that we would look at it, and we will continue to look at it.

One of the other areas is that it's been almost 10 years now, or a little over 10 years, and over 400 communities have lost bus services. This is an attempt to bring back services to communities, to make sure that the government does not run the bus industry, that the bus industry runs its own industry and produces economic benefit to the province and to local communities.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I am always very interested when the member for St Catharines makes one of his rare interventions in the House.

One of the particular things I think the member for St Catharines did not bring out today, and I think he may want to comment on this, is the restriction in the amount of time each member has when presenting his case. Prior to the change in rules that came upon us some time ago, the member would have had more opportunity to articulate his views on the subject. I know the member for St Catharines, who always brings us a great deal of wisdom, particularly from the peninsula, would want to have more opportunity to speak to this issue and many others.

One of the things I think we all find interesting here is that we talk about regulation, and let's not kid ourselves: Regulation in some ways is a subsidy. We're requiring a carrier to do some uneconomic things for the privilege of making an overall profit. It is a subsidy. It is. It's not a subsidy from the taxpayer, but it is a subsidy from other consumers on more profitable routes. That's true. There's a subsidy.

The government says: "Gee, we're going to get out of this. We're not going to provide the subsidy by way of regulation." The next question is, are you prepared then to guarantee some sort of service to these communities that will lose it, and if they cannot economically provide it, will there be some kind of guarantee of service, ie, a taxpayer subsidy?

It happens in municipalities. In municipalities it's not regulated; it's a monopoly. The taxpayer pays a subsidy in municipalities. I think that's perfectly all right. But in my part of the world, intercity buses is what it's about.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Catharines, two minutes.

Mr Bradley: I am pleased to respond. First of all, I want to respond to an interjection from the member for Quinte, because it shouldn't be lost from the record. He very wisely said that it was a rare intervention, but not one that was well done.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): That's Brant-Haldimand.

Mr Bradley: Was it Brant-Haldimand? Sorry. I thought it was Quinte in this case.

Mr Baird: Quinte was "yep."

Mr Bradley: Oh, yes, Quinte was "yep," we were lying or something. Sorry. My apology.

Looking at, first of all, Etobicoke West, the member intervened. I must compliment him on his tie this after-

noon. It certainly has enhanced us visually in this House. I thought when he got up he was going to speak about Etobicoke and the fact that money was being taken from Etobicoke by the Minister of Education, but he didn't. He talked about regulation.

While I'm not totally in agreement with his argument, I like the fact that he advanced it, that there may be some out there who will try at least now. I think one of the reasons they didn't try before was because there was another obligation, however, that they simply couldn't skim the cream off the top and not provide the other service. But he makes a point about people who may want a very special service for a special community. I hope that works out; I hope that could be viable.

1610

With the MPP from Oshawa's intervention—I heard his speech earlier. It was a very interesting one. I simply ask, why rush? I'm encouraged a bit by the fact that 1998 is the final deadline and that there may be some room to make adjustments—I hope so. I appreciate very much the interventions by the members for Oakwood and Algoma-Manitoulin, both of whom showed the knowledge of the issues and the wisdom that we look for in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Before I begin today, I would like to note the presence and thank the member for Etobicoke West for being here today.

Mr Bradley: With that tie.

Ms Martel: Yes, with that tie—in fact, he was here yesterday to listen to most of the debate. There were a number of other folks in the front row who spent a good part of the time my colleagues were speaking also trying to intervene above them or over them. I won't comment on the quality of those interventions, but it did make for a most interesting afternoon. Given that he's got his pencil in hand, I suspect that in the two-minute exchange he will have when I finish we will also have some interjections and some comments, and again I won't talk about the merit or the value of those at this point.

But I do thank him for being here. He promised he would hear me speak and I thank him for coming. I wish the rest of the colleagues who were sitting in the front yesterday were here as well.

However, I want to say I'm very pleased to participate in the debate today because this issue, Bill 39, which in fact is the first step to full deregulation of the bus industry in Ontario, is terribly, terribly important to the people who come from the part of the province that I represent.

It's very important in northern Ontario in many communities, big and small, that the province intervene directly to ensure that those communities have safe, efficient, effective bus service. The fact of the matter is that in many of those communities there is no other service, particularly for people who do not own automobiles, be they students, seniors or other people who may be unemployed or, for whatever reason do not have the ability to finance those kinds of things these days.

I'm very pleased to be able to address the issue today on behalf of people in northern Ontario who I firmly believe will be very, very negatively affected by full bus deregulation in the province of Ontario.

My only wish is that at some point during the course of this debate we are going to hear from a rural Conservative caucus member. I say that because I believe people in rural Ontario are also going to be dramatically and negatively affected by full bus deregulation.

I'm sorry the member for Lambton is not here. He was here yesterday, also making some comments, the value of which I will not comment on. I wish he was here today and I wish he would take the time to encourage some of his rural caucus members to throw off their shackles, to forget whatever the Minister of Transportation is trying to tell them about this bill and to firmly and responsibly represent the interests of people in their communities because I think the impacts and the effects on residents in their communities will be the same as the people I represent in northern Ontario.

I hope that before the debate on Bill 39 is finished we are going to hear from someone from rural Ontario from the Conservative caucus. I say that with all due respect to the interventions that have been made by the minister and from the member for Oshawa who, I think we all recognize, do not represent the kinds of communities that I want to talk to and speak on behalf of today.

I want to focus on three issues with respect to Bill 39, and they are as follows:

First, I want to speak a little bit about what the impact of bus deregulation has been in the States, because we have an example that we can look to. We have a neighbouring jurisdiction that we can have regard to. I think it is terribly important for this government to take a serious look at what happened in the US with full bus deregulation and to wonder why the same could not be applied here.

Secondly, I want to talk a little bit about the very negative impact this Conservative government policy is having on an agency of this very same Conservative government, and that is the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, an agency which is regulated by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Not only in terms—

Mrs Boyd: Point of order, Mr Speaker: There's no quorum again.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you call in the members. Up to a five-minute bell.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present.

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the member for Sudbury East.

Ms Martel: I'm glad the Conservatives came back into the House to listen to what is a very important issue and my comments on it. I know you are all so thrilled to be—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: My best knowledge is that it is not an accepted parliamentary practice to point out the members who are not here. I have been a little bit remiss in not pointing that out. I think I would like to do that now.

Ms Martel: Mr Speaker, I didn't name any member. I'm sorry. I thanked the Conservatives for coming back

into the House, and there isn't anything out of order in terms of that comment. If you want me to start naming folks, I can do that too.

I want to focus a little bit on the impacts of this legislation on the ONTC, because I am terribly worried about it. The fact of the matter is I suspect that the minister who is responsible for this very agency has not even looked at the detrimental effects of it on his own agency and certainly has not provided any of his concerns, I suspect, to the Minister of Transportation with respect to the impact of government legislation.

Finally, I want to contrast the direction this Conservative government is taking with respect to bus deregulation and the positions that are currently being taken on the issue of bus deregulation in both of our neighbouring jurisdictions, those being Quebec and Manitoba. When I do that, you will see that clearly we are heading in a direction that is completely opposed by our two neighbouring jurisdictions. I am left to wonder why it is that this Conservative government would head in a direction other provinces in the rest of Canada have no intention of following. I will lay out some of the reasons why they feel that full bus deregulation will not accomplish any of the things the minister yesterday purported it would and that in fact it would be very, very bad for people in their provinces who depend on bus service.

Let me first deal with the consequences in the States. As I said earlier, we've got a jurisdiction which we can point to which has had some experience with this issue. In about 1980, under the Republicans, there was a move to full bus deregulation in the United States. The consequences there have been terribly negative, and why it is that our Minister of Transportation could not look to those experiences and try and avoid those negative experiences at all costs is absolutely beyond me.

Let me refer to an article which was done by Professor Paul Dempsey. He is at the University of Denver law school and he is recognized as an expert in the area of transportation law. He is also editor of the Transport Law Journal at the same university. In 1990, after 10 years of the US experience of bus deregulation, he wrote an article entitled "Canadian Transport Liberalization." The article was based on the US experience, and he said very clearly there was no doubt in his mind that the negative experience could be easily transported here. He was very concerned about that. He pointed out that after the first four years of bus deregulation in the States, some 4,000 communities in America had lost the bus service they had—4,000 after the first four years of bus deregulation.

The second interesting point was that those communities could not all be categorized as small, remote or rural. In fact, only about 325 of the communities could be defined as rural, could be defined as very small, could be defined as remote. What happened is that some medium-sized communities or small cities also lost their bus service. I suspect the fact of the matter is there wasn't enough profit in there to interest those bus companies and they had no intention, in a deregulated system, of providing any service at all.

1620

I have to say to the members who are here today, why are we not having any regard to an experience we have

had in a neighbouring jurisdiction? I believe that, as firmly as I can as I stand here today, that experience of numerous communities losing their service, not only small and remote but mid-sized communities and small cities, are going to have the same impact here, and people in those communities who depend on bus service are going to lose it and will have no other alternative when it comes to transportation.

I would just encourage the members to take a look at some of the work that's been done with respect to the experience in the States, and to ask themselves why we are not moving as far away as we possibly can from deregulation or from that experience.

Let me talk a little bit about the impact on the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The authority to manage issues at the ONTC comes directly under the authority of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It is a scheduled agency of his ministry. I am very concerned that not only with respect to the massive cuts the Progressive government has made for ONTC, but also the very legislation that we are dealing with here today will, in effect, lead to the dismantling of that very important agency in our special part of the province.

By way of history, the ONTC was established by a former Tory government many years ago. It was established because there was a recognition that in northern Ontario some very special economic, social and transportation development issues had to be met and they had to be treated in a different way. So the ONTC was established as an agency of the government to deal with those very specific social, economic and transportation needs in order to respond to those very special needs.

We have seen, since the advent of this Conservative government in this place after June, that there has been a very specific and a very systematic attack on that agency. The first came in the form of the funding cuts which were announced on November 29. In those cuts, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines made it clear that over the next two years some \$10 million would be withdrawn from the provincial subsidy that currently goes to the ONTC. That \$10 million over two years represents fully two thirds of all of the provincial subsidy that flows from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to this agency to carry out very specific and very important operations in our part of the province.

The ONTC provides a number of subsidized services; well, they used to until the cut. They used to provide air service. They still continue to try to provide passenger rail service. They provide marine services, ferry services, to a number of communities. They also provide commercial services, those that pay for themselves, or those that the commission hopes will pay for themselves, and that includes freight rail services, telecommunications and the bus operations, which are operated not only in northern Ontario, but charter services from Toronto into northern Ontario and to other parts in the United States.

We have seen that there's been a significant cut in the subsidy which has dramatically affected the ability of the ONTC to carry out its duty to provide transportation services in the north. One aspect of that cut has been the complete elimination of norOntair, which provided

scheduled air services into 17 communities in north-eastern Ontario and northwestern Ontario. With the elimination of \$6 million to ONTC this year, that whole service has been completely gutted as a provincially offered service.

We have the scenario now that we have a number of communities that are being serviced by private aircraft, no one knows for how long, no one knows at what kind of fares, and we also have the situation where the minister right now is paying a subsidy, through the payment of the MNR plane, to be in servicing at least three of those communities because there was no private air carrier that was interested in going into three of those communities. He had to, in a scramble at the end of March, find some alternative in order to ensure that those communities would have air service as he had promised earlier in December. So we have the scenario of a dismantling of important services because of a cut in funding.

We also have, with this bus legislation before us, the prospect of government legislation now actually furthering the dismantling of ONTC because this legislation will make it very difficult for the ONTC to continue to operate its commercial bus operations, those operations that in fact make some money—not a whole heck of a lot—for the corporation in order to allow it to provide other services.

Yesterday, in a question to the minister, I commented on the impact of the Conservative bus deregulation on the ONTC, and in the ONTC's business plan for 1996, which was released some eight weeks ago on January 26 the ONTC said the following: "The anticipated deregulation of the bus industry in 1998 is a serious threat to bus operations, which have been a marginal commercial business for ONTC. The entrance of new competitors on Ontario Northland's major routes would put further pressure on this operation."

ONTC serves the communities of Kirkland Lake, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury, and brings people up through from Toronto into our special part of the province. What we are doing by moving to full deregulation, as we will, as is the first step under this bill, is to put those services at risk, and to put those people and those communities that depend on those services at risk as well.

I remain extremely concerned about the ability of people in northern Ontario to access services which people in southern Ontario take for granted. The fact of the matter is that it is the responsibility of this government—it's the responsibility of any provincial government—to ensure that people in the province have access to decent, safe and affordable services, regardless of where they live in the province. But with this legislation, this government is moving to dismantle that. This government signals that it doesn't believe in that principle, that it doesn't care about the ability of people who live in northern Ontario to have access to decent and effective transportation systems. I find that really disappointing.

What worries me the most is the kind of response I got from the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines yesterday when I raised this very serious issue with him. He is the minister responsible for the ONTC. He is the minister responsible for advocating

on behalf of the needs of the ONTC, which represent the needs of people who live in northern Ontario. Yesterday, when I asked him what he was going to do to protect people in northern Ontario who rely on bus service provided by the ONTC, he had no answer for me. He said that he was aware of the comment that had been made in the 1996 business plan and that he had asked his staff to talk to ONTC and to investigate upon which kind of information they were making that statement.

The minister's got to get with the program. It's up to him to know what's going on in the agencies he is responsible for. It is up to him to determine if government cuts or government legislation are going to have a dramatic and negative impact on the agencies for which he has responsibility. It was clear by his answer in the House yesterday that he has absolutely no idea what the impact of bus deregulation is going to be on an agency he administers or has responsibility for, and hence he has absolutely no idea about the negative impact that loss will have on the people he's supposed to represent in northern Ontario as Minister of Northern Development.

I can only say to him that I sure hope that sooner or later he will get with it and he will start to raise the very serious concerns he should have been raising with his colleague the Minister of Transportation if he is to seriously assume the responsibility he has as Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

The third point I wanted to raise had to do very much with the position other jurisdictions in Canada are taking with respect to this important issue of deregulation. I want to take some time to contrast the position of this Conservative government in Ontario on bus deregulation with the position which is now being taken on bus deregulation by both the provincial government of Quebec and the provincial government in Manitoba. Their positions are very current. They were adopted and presented by those provincial governments, in the case of Quebec, November 20, 1995, and in the case of Manitoba, November 23. So they are very relevant, they are very current and they express the positions of the governments that are in place in those two jurisdictions right now.

1630

It is worthwhile for me just to back up a bit and give a bit of history on why those two governments are now in the position of very publicly stating their position on this important issue of bus deregulation. About two or three years ago, the federal and the provincial governments across the country entered into an agreement on trying to reduce trade barriers in Canada. One of the recommendations that came from the agreement that was signed was a recommendation to examine the role of the regulatory agencies in Canada, particularly with respect to interprovincial transportation, and so, as a result, at the end, in late 1994, what is called the Canadian Intercity Bus Task Force was established to look at the very issue of the economic and the regulatory framework which is now governing intercity bus systems and the intercity bus industry right across Canada. What the task force was to do was to take the positions of the various provinces which cared to comment and provide those comments to the federal government through Transport Canada with

respect to options for changing the system that currently exists.

It's worth mentioning that the task force was directed to consider the following topics: They were asked to look at service to rural and remote communities, they were asked to look at the core network service in their own jurisdiction, they were asked to look at employment in the bus industry in their own province, and finally they were asked to comment or look at the viability of the domestic bus industry, including the impact American competition would have on the domestic bus industry here in Canada.

It's really important to look very clearly at the positions of both Manitoba and Quebec, because there are some really important conclusions they have come to which this minister in this province ought to have a regard for.

First if I talk about the system in Quebec, the system which is in place right now to govern bus transportation is responsible under the transportation act and the bus transport regulations, and there has been a commission established which is called la Commission des Transports du Québec, which is responsible for issuing permits to operators in the province to operate, and very much like Ontario, a carrier or an operator that applies for a permit has to provide evidence of competence, evidence of the financial viability of their company and also evidence that there exists a market that it can serve and that it will be capable of serving.

The commission then takes on the responsibility of weighing all of that evidence that comes in and looks particularly at the existence of other similar services on other routes to be sure that whatever is proposed by the new operator will not result in the disappearance of a bus service that's currently in place and will not result in the disappearance of employment of operators currently servicing those routes. In that way they regulate competition on similar routes and in that way they ensure that there is cross-subsidization, ie, profitable routes pay for less profitable routes, and they do that via the licence and the licence conditions.

The Quebec government, in response to the federal government's determination to move on bus deregulation nationally has this to say with respect to moving to full deregulation. First, they outline why they think regulation in their province is important, and the Quebec government says:

"Quebec legislation targets a stable, economical, effective bus transportation system serving most of the province. It does so by controlling carrier access to the market, setting schedules and rates, and promoting a system of cross-subsidization in order to maintain bus services which are not self-financing....

"In this context"—says the Quebec government—"the most likely consequences of total intercity bus transport deregulation would be:"

Number 1, "the bus transport system would be limited to those services which are profitable;"

Number 2, "a portion of the population which currently enjoys services would have to provide those services itself, or the government would have to intervene financially;"

Number 3, "strong competition on the major lines would destabilize services to some extent (fewer departures at off-peak hours, changes in carriers and problems with transfers);"

Number 4, "rates would drop on the main lines but would substantially increase on the less heavily travelled lines, if services were not eliminated altogether."

Finally, "governments would save on transport permit management but would have to pay more for highway safety monitoring."

That is the conclusion that the government of Quebec has come to, a government that operates on a regulated system now that is responding to a federal request for full deregulation on a national scale.

They went on to say, "As things stand, total deregulation threatens to accelerate the process whereby regional bus transport services gradually disappear. Moreover, the resulting greater competition on more profitable routes would force carriers to drop less heavily travelled time periods and concentrate on the hours and periods most in demand."

"While it may be natural and logical, this move toward market concentration runs counter to our priorities, namely, maintaining stable services accessible to the greatest number of Quebecers possible."

That was an analysis done by the Quebec government and was published by the Quebec government in November 1995, so it is very current; it is very relevant; it responds directly to the situation they have in our province, a situation which I say to you is not much different than the situation we face in Ontario now.

There is no doubt that government too has experienced a drop in ridership on buses over a number of years, the same as we have in Ontario, but their response to the problem is not to turn to deregulation because they firmly believe that the negative consequences of deregulation are far more serious and will have far more of an impact on people who now rely on those important services.

Let me look at the situation of Manitoba, and this should be an interesting one because of course it is a Conservative government which is in Manitoba, as we all know. In response to the federal proposal to deregulate bus service, the Conservative government in Manitoba had this to say.

They, in the same way, I should point out, have a system that is monitored under the Highway Traffic Act. They also have a Manitoba Motor Transport Board and again the board regulates competition on the basis of economic entry and by regulating fares and schedules. The board also ensures there is cross-subsidization because of the means and ways it has at its disposal to issue licences. Again, there is not a cost that is imposed on the taxpayer, because the cross-subsidization ensures that those people who travel on the heavy routes do in fact help offset the costs on those routes that are not used frequently by travellers.

The consequences that they point out to deregulation are as follows, and first I should point out what their purpose was in the first place to regulate, and they have said:

"The basic purpose of Manitoba's system of motor carrier economic regulation is to ensure that rural,

northern, small and remote communities in Manitoba are provided with adequate for-hire highway transportation services at a reasonable cost. Manitoba's use of economic regulation in the transportation industry is an instrument to achieve a specific policy goal. It does not reflect a general belief that economic regulation is good in itself, or that such regulation is always the preferred means for the public sector to achieve its goals.

But, they went on to say, "the specific rationale for economic regulation is clear. In an unregulated market, many communities in Manitoba would not have access to scheduled bus passenger services, or would receive inadequate or unaffordable service due to insignificant passenger volume and revenues in relation to costs."

In their conclusion to the federal government with respect to their advice on whether or not the feds should look at deregulation, the Manitoba Conservative government said the following in November 1995:

"The purpose of our submission is to set out Manitoba's position on the future deregulation of the intercity bus industry. Our submission is brief as all significant problems experienced by this industry in Manitoba have been resolved within the current regulatory regime.... This positive record is the basis for our position that the existing system of economic regulation in Manitoba largely achieves its objectives, and is capable of managing the adjustments required by the industry to preserve its economic viability. There is simply no major problem that would be addressed by bus deregulation, and no significant constituency advocating it on other than theoretical or ideological grounds."

It would do well for the minister in this province, the Minister of Transportation, to take a very serious look at what our sister provinces are saying, because the fact of the matter is, each of them operates in a regulated environment, each of them uses a transportation board to ensure there is cross-subsidization and uses a permit process to ensure that small, less profitable routes will be serviced by this industry. They do that because they ensure that those operators that have very profitable routes are, by way of licence, put in a position of having to serve those communities where obviously they can't rake off all the cream.

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The end result of the move of Bill 39, which is the first step to deregulation, will be exactly those consequences that both Manitoba and Quebec have outlined and it will be exactly the same as the very negative consequences we saw in the United States only four years after full bus deregulation came into effect.

I say to members in this House today that people in rural and northern Ontario deserve the same transportation systems as those in the rest of the province get and this minister has got to back off and back away from bus deregulation because it will only have very negative and very serious effects on people in northern and rural Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Ouellette: Just a couple of quick points on what the member for Sudbury East had mentioned. First of all, she mentioned the only bus service that was currently available there and part of the problem is that's all that's

allowed to be there now. Smaller companies are not allowed to expand and to bring in new ideas. Entrepreneurs can't bring in smaller lines in order to promote feeder services.

To continue on, in regard to the US, the trends to less service to small communities were already well established and can't be blamed on deregulation. Furthermore, the larger carriers came to recognize that they cut their service networks too deeply when deregulation was implemented. They had to go back to try and recapture feeder traffic for their main routes. This is an example of experience that Ontario bus industries have gained from the US mistake, that it was already in place before deregulation came to be. That is one of the reasons 1998 is one of the dates we are looking at.

Furthermore, there is lots of evidence supporting economic deregulation of this industry by credible authorities, not least of which was recommended to open up the intercity bus industry made by the 1992 federal Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation. Those are just a couple of the points we would like to address that the member has brought forward.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the remarks by the member for Sudbury East very much because, representing a riding which certainly relies upon transportation other than the individual vehicle, she certainly would know the potential of the implications of deregulation on those communities.

In the riding of Sudbury East, we used to have a tremendous amount of railway service; there still is some, I believe, that's available but it's not what it once was. In fact, Capreol, which is I think the member's place of birth, home town, a number of years ago was a place noted for being a major railway community. As we see the railway fading from the scene—I say that with lament—it means the bus services that we have to various communities are extremely important and I'm glad the member raised those issues, which are foremost in the minds of those who reside in those kinds of communities.

I think there's a sense of fairness that was also involved in her remarks in that there are others who are assisted indirectly through the federal and provincial governments and local governments in terms of transportation, but those who are going to be reliant upon this in the future are going to be those who reside in the villages, the hamlets, the small towns, some of the smaller cities, many of which I mentioned in my remarks, some I was unable—

Mr Colle: You left out Zurich.

Mr Bradley: I was unable to mention Zurich at the time, I was unable to mention a lot of communities I would liked to have mentioned; Paris, Ontario, comes to mind, Hespeler and other places of that nature, but the limitations that are placed on the debates in this House prevent me from doing so. I am glad the member was able to share with us some of her concerns and those of her constituents.

Mr Michael Brown: I'm always interested in the comments of the member for Sudbury East. I think as she went through reviewing the regulatory regime that's being presented by the government, at least an interim regulatory regime, moving to total deregulation of the busing, the concerns she expressed are ones that particularly

people in northern Ontario and rural Ontario are well acquainted with.

One of the things that is most disturbing to my constituents in Algoma-Manitoulin is that their choices for public transportation are diminishing rapidly. Frankly, I don't remember precisely when we lost our last train service, but it was some long time ago. We now have had a severe restriction on the amount of air travel that we can do on a commercial basis since the government unilaterally told the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission that they would have to divest themselves of norOntair and that the public transit of northern Ontario by way of air is no longer available.

Coupled with this, we see a deterioration of our roads and we see unbelievably high gas prices that have escalated rapidly in the last few months and show no sign of being reduced. Of course, in my constituency it's far higher than it was anywhere else. On top of that, the automobile insurance issues are still revolving around. The previous government put a tax on automobile insurance premiums, which certainly didn't help the situation. But regardless of that, it is getting almost prohibitive—not almost; it is getting prohibitive—for many of my constituents to own automobiles. So the bus is going to be the only alternative for many folks in my part of the world, and I appreciate the member bringing forward a very interesting presentation on this matter.

Mrs Boyd: It's a pleasure to comment on the speech by my colleague from Sudbury East. As always, she was well prepared, had done her homework, and provided for us very, very clear information about the issues at hand. I'm very grateful, because this is not an area where a lot of people have the kind of wealth of information that the member for Sudbury East has about the effect of bus deregulation, particularly in the north.

It struck me as she was speaking that one of the things that happens to us in a modern society is that very often we don't appreciate a service until we begin to lose it. That certainly was true, as the member pointed out, around rail service. I think in many parts of this province people took rail service, particularly passenger rail service, very much for granted, and only understood what it meant to the whole process of community development and community maintenance when the train service was gone.

Our deep concern around the current proposal around bus deregulation is similar, that many people now take for granted the availability of bus service. Most people in the province do not seem to understand that services to relatively small, unprofitable areas of the province have tended to be maintained because the bus companies have been required to provide those services if they are to have the very lucrative routes that they enjoy and for which they compete very vigorously, as those of us know who know the appeals against the highway transportation commission.

So I would say that it is always a pleasure to congratulate my colleague from Sudbury East on the excellence of her preparation and the excellence of her delivery.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sudbury East has two minutes.

Ms Martel: I want to thank all of my colleagues for their comments. I particularly appreciate the comments made by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, because as a northerner and one whose community has lost northern service, he very clearly understands that we in northern Ontario feel that we are yet again under attack by this Conservative government when it comes to those services and programs which are terribly important to be delivered in northern Ontario. You are putting us at a distinct disadvantage. I would argue that you are discriminating against us when it comes to the delivery of adequate, effective and affordable transportation service in our special part of the province.

1650

With respect to the comments made by the member for Oshawa, let me say a couple of things. He said that there was only one bus carrier operating in northern Ontario, due to regulation. I would say to him that without regulation, sir, most of those communities in northern Ontario would not have bus service at all. The fact of the matter is that under the licence permit that ONTC operates under, in some of the small communities where money is not to be made, our service is a direct consequence of the licence being issued to allow ONTC to go into the bigger communities, and it is because of that cross-subsidization which appears on the licence that we have communities in northern Ontario which receive service when they would not otherwise.

Secondly, he talks about the US and says it was well on its way to a loss of bus service before deregulation. It's your government, sir, that is offering deregulation as the panacea to end all of the bus loss. I have heard your minister say in this House that more communities will get service under bus deregulation. I've heard him say that at least on two occasions. I am saying to you that the experience in the United States is completely different, and if he had read anything about that, he would not have made those kinds of statements in the House.

Finally, the recommendation of the royal commission is part of the proposal which the federal government has put forward, and indeed the position of Manitoba and Quebec responds directly to that federal proposition for bus deregulation. Those two jurisdictions are opposed, and so should we be.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 39, an act to amend the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act and the Public Vehicles Act and to make consequential changes to certain other acts falling under the auspices of the transportation ministry.

As you know, the government will deregulate Ontario's intercity bus industry, but not until January 1, 1998. In the meantime, we are introducing an interim measure which will ensure a smooth transition to a deregulated environment. The legislation is good news for Ontarians for three main reasons:

First, Ontarians can be assured that the public safety remains the top priority for this government. The board will continue to apply the rules of the current regulatory regime and will have enhanced powers to do so. The legislation moves towards economic deregulation, which

will have no impact on public safety or safety regulations.

Second, deregulation and the elimination of red tape creates greater opportunities for entrepreneurs, new business, investment and jobs.

Third, by getting rid of regulations and red tape, we are opening up the industry so that there is greater competition, competition that will lead to more choice and better service options.

As you know, my riding of Simcoe Centre is a diverse riding, one made up of many rural communities, small towns and larger cities. I am certain that the people of small communities such as Bond Head, Lefroy, Bell Ewart and Minesing, as well as the larger centres of Innisfil, Bradford and Barrie, would welcome more choices when it comes to intercity bus service. Accordingly, I can appreciate the concerns of those people who feel that deregulation may mean less service to small towns.

However, if that was indeed the case, I wouldn't be standing here supporting Bill 39. Many people who live in my riding commute great distances every day to get to work, and for most people that means getting in the car and heading down the 400 to Toronto. Many constituents have told me that there currently isn't much in the way of choice for getting from town to town or travelling to Toronto. In fact, with the exception of the larger centres, many of these communities in my riding are not served at all by the major carriers.

I welcome the prospect of these people as consumers having more choice in terms of bus transportation. I also welcome the prospects of new businesses starting up and the potential for these entrepreneurs to break into a market that has been for too many years dominated by a few major players. The reality of a regulated environment such as the one Ontario has operated under for the past 70 years is that regulation doesn't guarantee service. According to statistics from the federal government, during the past 15 years, approximately 400 communities across Ontario have lost their bus service.

By removing regulatory barriers and red tape, this legislation will encourage local entrepreneurs to take over services larger providers aren't interested in. Local service providers will now have the capability of coming forward to meet public travel needs. In turn, this will mean jobs, investment and better service to rural areas.

Contrary to what the opposition would like the public to believe, competition in the transportation industry is healthy so long as it is fair competition. The current regulated environment has prevented new operators from providing services to small and rural communities. This certainly has proved to be unfair to potential operators and unfair to the residents of those communities which have lost their bus service.

The current system of regulation is also outdated. Great Britain and the United States, for example, have already moved to deregulation.

The opposition may object to this legislation and our attempts to move forward. However, it is worth noting that the industry itself supports a strategy for achieving transition to full economic deregulation. In fact, the process was developed on the basis of industry proposals.

Bill 39 is also good for taxpayers. After 10 years of the opposition parties, and 65 tax increases later, the taxpayers of Ontario can use some good news. During the interim period, the industry itself will fully fund a streamlined Ontario Highway Transport Board until the end of 1997, when the final regulations are removed.

Users can also expect greater stability thanks to this legislation. Under Bill 39, scheduled carriers would be required to provide 30 days' notice before making significant service reductions of 25% or more. Under the current regulations, carriers only have to provide 10 days' notice. Bill 39 will also extend the notice for abandonment of services from its current 10-day period to a 90-day period.

In summary, the government has no place in telling bus companies how to do business except of course in the area of public safety. I must stress that I recognize that public safety must maintain a top priority, and this legislation in no way compromises that. But surely bus companies don't need the government to tell them where and which communities to serve.

Business people know enough to serve communities that have a demand for such services and entrepreneurs are best at recognizing new opportunities. Regulations haven't worked in guaranteeing service or low ticket prices. It is time to move to deregulation and let the market demand look after itself.

This Legislature should move to pass Bill 39 so that we can provide greater bus service to Ontarians in small communities and at competitive prices. This legislation will bring fairness to the bus industry and offer Ontarians more choice.

This legislation is what Ontarians and the bus industry have been asking for. It represents a step forward in an industry that has been wrapped in economic red tape and behind the times for too long. I therefore will be voting in favour of Bill 39 and urge my colleagues to use their wisdom and do the same.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Michael Brown: I most enjoyed the comments previously made. I, though, come from a rural part of the province, a northern part of the province. We get a little confused here. We're talking here about deregulating intercity bus services. Well, if we're talking about deregulating intercity bus services, why would we not talk therefore about deregulating municipal bus services? Why can't I go out and run a bus up and down Bay Street? Because that is a very profitable route. I'm looking over at a person across the floor who might know, now Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I suspect a Bay Street run with a bus would seem very profitable if I could have Mike's little bus and I could go down there.

1700

You know what? The government of Ontario actually subsidizes those municipal buses. They not only have a monopoly that keeps Mike from running a bus down Bay Street; they actually subsidize the monopoly to provide it. I'm not saying that's a bad idea, but when you're out in the rural part of this province, in the northern part of this province, the intercity bus services are similar to running up and down Bay Street or wherever.

If you're in favour of deregulation, don't stop here. Go the whole ball of wax: no subsidies for anybody, whether they're municipalities, whether they're anybody. Why do it? Why stop with the intercity? Go the whole way. Follow your own logic and you'll find it makes no sense. It would make absolutely no sense to do that. In Toronto or in Hamilton or in Elliot Lake, it makes no sense to do that. Then why does it make sense in the rural and northern parts of the province to do it? I ask that question of the member.

Mrs Boyd: I'm rather nervous about the last comments of my friend the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. I wouldn't want to put any ideas into these people's heads. In fact, I saw their eyes light up over there, so it got a little bit scary for a minute. I'm not sure that some of the urban transportation systems might not feel the process of withdrawing subsidy hasn't already started. That makes me a little nervous.

However, having said that, I would like to comment on the member's speech, particularly the area around notice. I know the minister really emphasized this issue around, "Oh, now people are going to have to have 90 days' notice in order to stop a service as opposed to 10 days now." That's scant comfort to the communities we've been talking about. Having 90 days to worry about how you're going to get to where you need to go and how you're going to get goods delivered in terms of Bus Parcel Express and so on is very scant comfort indeed. I don't think anyone should take seriously that that provision within this act is going to in any way ameliorate the concerns.

The minister said yesterday, as you did, that there'll be an effort in that notice period to try and find some way to accommodate the needs of the community, but we're all very well aware—I mean, let's not be naïve about this. What we're talking about is deregulation in order to improve competitiveness. Competitiveness is based on profit, and if there is no incentive through the lucrative routes for the buses to be maintained on less lucrative routes, that's not what we're going to see. You folks constantly tell the world that what has to happen is market forces, and so the people in those communities that are going to be affected know what that means.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Just to add my couple of minutes of time here, it's very interesting to listen to some of the comments and the different views. What I find a little bit perplexing is that—and we have heard quite a bit about the northern communities, which I am not too familiar with—we shouldn't be concerned with those small communities that are now enjoying full service, that we shouldn't be worried.

We have heard the member, the previous speaker, saying that we can't tell the industries where they should be providing a service and what kind of service they should be providing. Is this what it's all about? Is this what we have come to really offer the Ontario public, that we don't want to provide any longer a service where we don't feel it's convenient but at the same time we are providing a very efficient service that is not running a deficit, it's not costing any money today to the system at all?

I think it is our responsibility to see that those small communities, especially in northern Ontario or the far-reaching areas of the province, are provided with that much-needed service. Instead I hear from some of the members on the government side: "Do not interfere. Let's go to the private sector. Don't tell them what service they should be providing, where they should be providing that service." My goodness, if we can't tell a bus company, private or whatever, that it has the responsibility to provide service to all the communities in Ontario, then what is our job, then what is the government's job if it wants to deregulate, if it wants to give the authorization to other people but not retain the control as to what kind of service they should be providing?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments of the member for Simcoe Centre. One thing he said jumped out at me, where he talked about the fact that entrepreneurship would bring in new business and new businesses would start. What struck me was the fact that in order for that to happen, there would have to be loss of, in most cases—there may be some new, but I don't think it would be a lot. In most cases there will be a loss of an existing company that's providing the service and jobs that are there.

Knowing the agenda of this government, particularly as it relates to wages and how it relates to unions, clearly, the impression I had from the member's comments was that he was quite excited and supportive of the idea that where there may be half-decent-paying jobs and perhaps a union there, if it's been a long-established route with a long-established company, that would be gone. In the deregulated world of Mike Harris, of course there's no need for the government to regulate or get in the way, because their whole purpose is to stand out of the way.

So I would think this is consistent, as disappointing as it is to see it happening, it's certainly consistent with the approach that this government has taken with regard to workers, with regard to wages, with regard to unions and the ability of working people and their families to derive their fair share of the benefit of the wealth that is created in this province. Indeed, this is, regardless of what the government says, a good place to invest and a good place to make money. It's a shame that more workers are going to pay the ultimate price of job loss and decent wages at the altar of the Common Sense Revolution.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe Centre has two minutes.

Mr Tascona: I'd just like to respond to the statements made by other members. With respect to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I'd just like to say that it's nice to see that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive in the Liberal Party. Don't stop. We'll have to take a look at that.

I would like to say that bus service is not taken for granted in areas that are not being serviced. Certainly, economic deregulation is not going to result in what my friend the member for Hamilton Centre is saying, that entrepreneurship and a new business automatically results in an existing operation being put down. It is a fact that the current labour relations laws do provide for successor rights and if a union operation is affected, they'll be covered. There have been no changes to the labour

relations law and my friend knows that. So the protections are in place and we would encourage that new operators get in place so we can deal with it in the rural centres, especially in the areas that are not being provided. Certainly, at the federal level they're proposing that we move to deregulation and we're in line with that move. But it's not at the jeopardy of public safety.

Just to respond to the member for London Centre with respect to the abandonment notice, I hardly see that it is not an improvement when we're talking about 10 days' notice currently being provided, to move it up to 90 days. It's certainly in the interests of the public for those measures to be taken.

The other comment that I've heard throughout the debate this afternoon is that communities could be affected, but they don't know, which is purely speculation and it's certainly premature. We're trying to address a problem that currently exists that has been identified. It's supported by the industry and it's also supported by the public at large.

1710

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sergio: I wish to take a few minutes and add to the discussion. It is being somewhat exaggerated in many ways on both sides and there are very good arguments coming out on both sides. The arguments coming out from the government side revolve strictly and simply on two particular fronts. One is that they are moving too fast without any consideration whatsoever, and the other one, which is the most important, is that they wish to privatize. It is simply and solely that. They say: "Go to free enterprise. Let's get the government out of the bus industry. Let's give it to the free enterprisers, if you will, and let us sit back." Well, that's fine and dandy. Let private enterprise provide some services as well.

But I believe that there is a role and there has to be a role, should be a role for the government as well. In this particular case, as in many others which we have seen from the government, it seems that the government is giving away everything—kit and caboodle and everything else.

The question is this: If we are willing to deregulate, to sell off, if you will, to private industry, what controls do we retain so we can assure the public in Ontario, those small communities that practically live on a bus service? We don't have that assurance.

As the concluding member for Simcoe Centre was saying just now, we don't know if they're going to be affected. We have been saying that all along, that before you come up with a proposal or take certain actions, make sure how this is going to affect the people of Ontario. What will be the consequences?

So I am pleased to hear that because this is exactly what they are saying, but they are not doing it. Instead of saying: "We give you notice now, as at April 1, that on January 1, 1998, you guys are gone. You're on your own." We are telling the students that they are on their own. We are telling the workers they're on their own. We're telling the unemployed they're on their own. We're telling the battered women that they are on their own, and now we're telling everybody in Ontario that they are on their own. They have to fend for themselves.

The consequences are very far-reaching. It is not as simple as saying, as the member for Etobicoke West, Mr Stockwell, had said, "It has been so long that nobody has been checking the regulation, but some time we have to look at it." They say, "Unless it's broken, why even look at it to fix it?" So if it ain't broken, why fix it?

We have a system that has been very, very efficiently serving the people of Ontario. It has been doing that, but the member was saying that because the regulation has not been checked for so many years, we should do away with it because it's got too much red tape. I would be surprised if we were to propose this to the people of Ontario, especially those in need and saying, "Well, maybe we should be looking at the regulations, if you will, and find those areas that need some fine-tuning because the service has been excellent." But no, what we hear from the government side is that because of some fine-tuning that may be needed, let's try winding down your system.

That's exactly what the member was saying during his presentation. I'm saying, if we have a system that has been proven over the years to be efficient and at no cost, if you will, why are we saying we want to cut the red tape and give away the service to the private area? We should be saying as a government, "Let's cut the red tape, but let's not cut the service." But it seems that anything that is good for the country, if you will, that is good for Ontario, they want to give away to private industry. That's where I have a problem with it. That is why I wish to speak against the bill and I cannot support this particular bill.

I don't want to enrage the members on the other side. I don't want to continue to read some of the areas that will be affected. But our member for St Catharines was reading some of the areas, which is between 150 and 175 locations which will be affected, cut off. When he read Durham, the member for—I believe it's not even from the area of Durham, I believe it's from Ottawa, he said, "Well, indeed, Durham as well." Surprise, surprise.

But I just want to mention a couple from this list here, and I'll tell you why I'll do that. I'll tell you the implications for some of these communities here, communities such as—I don't mean abutting Metro Toronto. I'm speaking of communities like Gravenhurst, Haliburton, Huntsville, Elora, Collingwood, Bracebridge. Those areas, for some of us who know central Ontario, if you will, the tourist region, those communities look at the bus industry with much avidness. I would like to hear, if this particular bill were to be presented to the public at a public forum, how they would respond when they really, really look for survival at the great urban areas, especially the tourist regions.

Did the government hear or ask the tourist offices bureau, people that usually also make a living out of that, how they will be affected? No, they didn't. They said, "We will let you know, in 1998, January 1, how this will be affected, once we give it away." Well, isn't that wonderful? Do we have any statistics on how many people are using bus tours, going on buses and visiting places, stuff like that? In the thousands. There are no statistics. There is no information. This is how the business wishes to operate. They come up with some weird ideas, priva-

tize, without taking into consideration how it affects the general public. It is indeed a grave concern.

There is no thought given to service cuts, to the costs, which is increasing fares, to jobs and benefits, privatization of what else comes with it; no public input whatsoever. To begin, between 150 and 175 locations or municipalities, communities, without service. Really, if the government maintains no controls and no power on those private companies, how do we control and how do we give citizens peace of mind when it comes to safety? We have been told, with respect to some of the comments from the other side, that they can do a better job than us. I haven't heard very much with respect to unsafe conditions within the bus industry, but we have had a lot of problems with the private industries when it comes to large trucks and stuff like that.

Has the government really given any thought, any indication, how this is going to affect the safety of the users in Ontario? What about those filtering into Ontario from other provinces or even from south of the border? It's unbelievable that the government is willing to throw away the baby with the bathwater here without taking into consideration how we are going to protect those people using buses all over Ontario.

It does not stop there. This does not only affect the people relying on buses either for pleasure travelling, students, retirees, whatever; it affects people in other areas as well. You can see gas skyrocketing. Gas at the gas pump is going to skyrocket. You're going to see a lot more cars on the road. You're going to see insurance premiums skyrocketing. Oh, yes, those insurance premiums. You people love this. I know the government side loves this. They will love seeing private enterprises, insurance companies, saying, "Give me, give me, give me."

I'll tell you what. You proceed with this mentality and, yes, you will have your coffers at election time filled by those industries' private companies. But I'll tell you one thing: They won't be able to fill the ballot box for you at the next election. That's guaranteed, because what you're doing when you're moving on so blindly, without any consultation on matters of this importance here, the public will resent it. Give it a year, a year and a half; once you put some of these measures in place and the public feels the repercussions of your actions, that's when you're going to get the people on your neck.

1720

It is not just those who rely solely on the bus to go from one area to another; the rest of the people will be affected as well. I don't have to tell you the impact. We heard the commissioner of Metro transportation say yesterday, "I don't know why the roads are so bad." A harsh winter, yes, but he says there are a lot more cars on the road. I wonder why. We are forcing people to do that, and once we do, we will have more cars and more traffic on the roads.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Yes, John, you're quite right.

It is not only one matter of concern with cuts to the service we provide to people who rely on it; it is how they affect everybody else. What about students who rely on that service and it no longer will be provided? How is a family supposed to provide that service?

Mr Hastings: It is a problem. You can't solve it for everyone.

Mr Sergio: It's a problem. You're right. I'm glad that you agree; I'm glad that members of the government side agree with that.

Even a couple of days ago it seemed that in one breath we heard the Premier, the Minister of Finance and government members themselves saying: "You know what? We are going to streamline, we are going to cut, but we are going to provide the same or better service." I fail to see how cutting is going to provide better service.

The next thing we are going to hear is that we will have to do more with nothing—not to do better with less, but with nothing. They will do less with nothing.

Mr Christopherson: That's 17 hours, 22 minutes and 43 seconds. Go for it.

Mr Sergio: I'll keep on going. I'll take another couple of hours. I have 17 hours now, so I can keep on going.

It was very interesting when a couple of nights ago at a fund-raising the Premier said, "We want to be the first and we want to be the best." This is rhetoric. It's a wonderful thing to say when you're speaking to an audience that has paid \$500 a ticket.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: I'll wait, Mr Speaker. Evidently, they don't want to hear what bothers them.

The Premier said a couple of nights ago, "We are going to be the best and we are going to be the first." How the heck are you going to do that?

The people of Ontario are watching you. You're cutting their service. You're cutting the service to 170 cities.

Mr Hastings: We'll think it over.

Mr Sergio: I think you should really think it over. You're quite right. How can you say, "We are doing that; we are providing a better service," when you are eliminating bus service to 150, 175 municipalities? I am waiting to hear from some of the people in those municipalities. I don't want to wait until 1998 when this will be implemented.

I think, as the member said, they should rethink it. That is the best thing I've heard from the government side since last June. They should rethink their position. I agree with that, and as long as they rethink their position, something better may come forth. In its present form, I can't support it and the people of Ontario shouldn't support something like this, they shouldn't be put to something like this which affects those who are in need and those who will have to feel the consequences as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mrs Boyd: I want to congratulate the member for Yorkview on his speech. I was glad to hear him talk about the environmental effect of fewer buses on the road and the way in which we know that tends to increase the kind of emission problem we have. This is an area where we haven't seen a lot of concern expressed in terms of public transportation, but it's an area which has a great deal of merit to it, and it's important for us to really look at what we are laying up for ourselves in the future.

People will have very little choice but to use private transportation. We know that because many of those who now use the bus services are people who are of relatively low income in many cases and take the bus because they

really find it difficult to afford a car, those are the people who will be using transportation methods to try to get from place to place and may be forced to rely on vehicles that do not have the kind of standards for emissions there ought to be.

It struck me when the member was talking that this is very much part and parcel of our concern about the possible disappearance of some of these routes, because we certainly know that where transportation is not affordable and is not within a reasonable distance, people still need to get from place to place, particularly if they're trying to work, particularly if they're trying to look after their families in an appropriate way.

I would say to the members opposite that the concerns we're expressing are real. We're not simply objecting to something the government is trying to do. We're trying to get the government to understand the importance of this issue.

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to respond to my friend the member for Yorkview. I always enjoy listening on a Thursday afternoon to the intellectual dribble from the members opposite. I want to correct the member on a number of points.

His tirade against the Conservative government's policies, even separate from the bill we're discussing, is most remarkable from a member of the Liberal Party. When they ran in the last federal election they said, "The GST is gone, scrapped." The Prime Minister said you could judge his credibility based on him doing it, you could judge his credibility on whether he took action. The member for Hamilton East, the Deputy Prime Minister, said she would resign if they didn't do it. She would resign and you could judge their credibility on that issue. If you noticed on the television last night, CBC spent 15 minutes covering the GST issue. That's more than they would cover a big earthquake. Before we take any lectures from a member in the official opposition on a government keeping its word, he should perhaps look in his own backyard.

I want to correct the record on a number of areas. The member said that the member for St Catharines, in listing a good number of communities across Ontario, said that these communities are all the communities that will lose bus service. Nothing could be further from the truth. The member for St Catharines was far more responsible than that. He said these are communities which could, not would. That's engaging in fearmongering for the people of Ontario, and this place deserves better than that.

Another issue the member talked about was bus tours, that thousands of people in Ontario take bus tours and this bill would hurt that. Of course, the bus tour industry, as everyone knows, is deregulated. There isn't any regulation requiring people to take bus tours to Niagara Falls and to Elora. They're deregulated already.

Finally, the member said was that we would love to see auto insurance companies raising insurance rates. If the member opposite would believe that members on this side of the House would actually believe that, it's rather a sad state of affairs.

1730

Mr Michael Brown: I always feel privileged to listen to the member for Yorkview as he brings forward the

positions that are important to the constituents in his part of the world right here in North York and Toronto.

I've been thinking about this. Why would the government want to do this? This is something that doesn't cost the government a whole lot of money. Compared to the subsidies you pay in transportation across the province, this is a relatively small amount of dollars that's involved in the regulation of bus service. I know you would know that, Mr Speaker. It's a relatively small amount of money, and yet we know—I don't want to fearmonger, but we do know—there will be many communities that will lose bus service. They will lose bus service, and all we're asking of them over there is why aren't they concerned about those communities and why won't they admit there will be communities that lose bus service under this regime?

I got thinking to myself, why would they want to do this? It's a rather cost-effective way of providing a bus system across Ontario that's coherent, services a lot of communities—and I thought, polls; they've had a look at the polls. What do they know from the polls? They know who the typical Conservative voter is and they know the typical Conservative voter doesn't ride on a bus. That's what they know: The typical Conservative voter doesn't ride on a bus. So if we eliminate intercity bus service, we're not going to affect us very much. Sure we're going to affect seniors who have been concerned about the many cuts the government has made, but they don't think they're going to vote for them anyway. They're going to affect students for whom they've upped tuition and made their lives very difficult. "But they're not going to vote for us anyway," the Tories are saying, "so therefore, why not? Let's be bold and strong and allow free enterprise to run the province of Ontario."

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): I want to just make a few brief comments with respect to the member for Yorkview because I really, really don't understand where he's coming from on this issue. We, as a government, aren't privatizing anything now, as the member tries to lead the public to believe. In fact, this is already an industry which is regulated by the government. It's a private industry, and of course it's regulated with respect to safety. We're going to continue to do that because over here on this side of the House we feel and believe very strongly that the government does in fact have a role within the regulation with respect to safety. We're going to continue to do that as a government, because of course, as you know, Mr Speaker, safety is our number one priority.

I look again at the comments the member made across the floor with respect to the number of cities and towns that we are somehow stripping bus service away from. I would ask the member across the way, where did he get this list of cities and towns? We happen to know that there were no consumers consulted with respect to this list; there were no operators that were consulted to obtain this list. Of course, I quite frankly believe this list is something that really leaves a lot to be desired with respect to its credibility, and as well I really don't believe that what we're doing is going to have a negative effect at all on the busing industry.

What he said really gave a very clear indication with respect to the way the whole Liberal caucus thinks. The

whole Liberal caucus is saying quite clearly no to innovation, they're saying no to doing more with less, they're saying no to new ideas and they're saying no to the private sector, Mr Speaker, and I would suggest to you that's exactly why the voters last June said no to the Liberal caucus.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Yorkview has two minutes.

Mr Sergio: This is wonderful. We could engage on and off because they are saying exactly the opposite of what they are proposing. We have just heard the member say, "How can you say this, how can you say that when you haven't consulted the public?" This is exactly our problem on this side of the House. We are saying, do not go ahead with it until—

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: We know what you do with it once it goes to the committee. You have not eight or nine, but you have 12 members there to shut down every possible, reasonable idea that comes forth, and we know what happens.

Mr Baird: We have nine in this committee.

Mr Michael Brown: You've hit a nerve.

Mr Sergio: Absolutely.

Mr Baird: We only have nine on this committee.

Mr Sergio: The member for Nepean said there's nothing wrong with the private industries and stuff like that, and competition is excellent and so forth.

You know what happens to competition when you drive it into the ground? Then the service will be so poor and the price will be so high that they probably will have the worst of both ends. We'll have no service and those few people who will be forced will have to pay through the nose.

Is this really what we are looking at? It should go to a committee, as the member from Mississauga is saying. It should go to a committee. Let the public decide. Don't say, as the former member from Simcoe said before, "We will let you know how this is going to affect the public after January 1, 1998."

Isn't that nice? You want to let the public know what you're doing now, you want to hear from the public what measures you should be taking into consideration, or you want to implement it and then say, "We'll see you back in 1998." I think it's quite wrong and I think they will reconsider, and I'm glad to follow this through the committee process.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to add a few comments to this debate. It's interesting that earlier on in some of the exchanges back and forth in the House, while one of the members was speaking, suddenly what appeared was the comment that maybe what we have here is another omnibus bill. I would just say to the Tory—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: At least they're awake. I won't ask for much more than that. They do seem to be awake and therefore alive and breathing.

As much as this may not be the key piece of legislation that defines your term in government, nor establishes whether or not you're successful in your agenda, certainly

you ought to be aware that Alvin Curling is taking a particular interest in this bill, and he may yet have some thoughts to express and some actions to express, because you say "omnibus" and Alvin jumps right to alert.

Moving aside the levity, I want to begin my comments by reflecting on something that was thrown out earlier as a heckle to a previous speaker. I think it was one of my Liberal opposition colleagues here on this side of the House who was in the process and talking about the benefits of regulation, and there was a Tory backbencher who said, "So if it moves, regulate it." I don't see any hands up taking ownership for that quip, but—there we are, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, I believe, is taking ownership. Why is it that doesn't surprise me? That does not surprise me in the least.

I would just say to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale that the response to that seems to be, from this government, that if it's a dollar, bow before it, kiss its feet and get out of the way and let it do whatever it likes, because quite frankly that is what deregulation is all about. Of course, that's consistent with this government's approach.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: We do seem to have woken them up to the point where now they're becoming actually animated. That's good to see. I was getting concerned about how many of you were dozing off and that's not the way we want to end here Thursday afternoon in the Legislature.

It is true that in terms of deregulating and getting government off the back and all the great little buzz phrases so many of you are so proud of and like to repeat over and over, the fact of the matter is that what you do, when you do that, is that in many cases, not in every case but in many cases, you have the effect of tearing down a lot of the positive public protection and public service regulations that are there, because it has helped us to build what the United Nations has recognized twice is the greatest country in the world to live in.

We know the great appeal this government sees in what happens in the United States, but quite frankly I still believe the vast majority of Ontarians are very respectful of our neighbours to the south and are pleased we have a relationship that by and large works for us in terms of the global economy, but reject that that is how we want to design our economy or that indeed we want to replicate their idea of what government means in a society as it relates to helping and benefiting the average working person and their family.

1740

We know Ronald Reagan was the President who brought in the deregulation of busing in the United States. We heard earlier, and it's worth repeating, that as a result of that, from 1982 to 1991 there were 5,690 communities left being serviced after they'd started with 11,820. That's a drop of over 50%.

We know Ronald Reagan has a particular attraction for Mike Harris Tories because of course the trickle-down theory of economics is one that Ronald Reagan ran on and that is very much what this government is about and very much what this government is into.

Mr Baird: You don't really believe that.

Mr Christopherson: While I continue to hear the cackling from the back benches of the government side, the reality is that George Bush had it right then when he said it was voodoo economics. It was proven that it didn't work. It didn't work in the States and it won't work here. Unfortunately, the facts are not getting in the way of you implementing the Common Sense Revolution and moving forward, in particular, with your tax cut.

We know that to pay for that tax cut you have had to review every single expenditure. You've made this into some great triumph of achievement you have by virtue of talking consistently about getting government out of the way and all the other things that are part of that mantra, but the reality is that the Ontario Highway Transport Board is \$450,000 a year this government just couldn't resist.

I sat over there. I was part of reviews, a lot of reviews, and sat at the cabinet table and listened to the arguments for both keeping and—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, come to order.

Mr Christopherson: —eliminating them, but the fact of the matter is—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Brantford.

Mr Christopherson: —that this government has no interest in putting the needs of the public first.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Listen to the groans, listen to the moans, but it's true. I did not say that you have absolutely no regard for public interest. I said you were not prepared to make that the priority of your government, and I stand by that. Your priority is to make sure you find enough money—\$5 billion a year—to pay for your tax cut. That is the priority and, unfortunately for the average working person and their family in the province of Ontario, that means a lot of things, both big and small, that make this a great place to live are being chucked out the window. We would suggest and I would suggest to you that this is another part of that. You are prepared to throw away a significant and important piece of what makes this a great place to live.

I'm sure that previous speakers have commented on it, but particularly in a province like Ontario and a nation like Canada, where the country's economy and the unity of our nation were built as a result of the rail system that united Canada and gave us the first opportunity to feel that we were truly a nation, a nation that has gone on to become, and I'll say it again, twice in the last few years the greatest place in the world to live as voted by the United Nations, we ought to be proud of that and we ought to be more prepared to fight for that rather than the cheap politics of a tax cut which plays to a very simple and straightforward hot button that says to anybody, "If you want to keep more money, vote for us." That's what you did and that's what you're going to do next month.

What we are going to continue to do is to point out time after time that while you, with great fanfare, announce that you're giving a 30% tax cut, a tax cut, by the way, where over 60% of that benefit will go to the top 10% income earners in the province of Ontario, while

you're being so proud of that achievement, we will continue to point out to Ontarians the price that's being paid and what we're losing in order to gain what will be for most working people a few bucks. The only real dollars to be seen, unfortunately, are by those who have already benefited the most from our economy and have and control the lion's share of the wealth. This, I believe, is no different.

I would also say that one of the other significant motivations is that this is very consistent with your whole idea of privatizing public service. Although we're talking about private interest industry, the issue here in my mind is very much akin to public services wherein you will be prepared to hive off those parts of public service—and in the Ministry of Transportation we're going to see a lot of that, with contracting out of road maintenance and other things that are part and parcel of this issue.

We are going to see you sell off to your friends, because we expect you'll follow the same pattern as your Tory cousin Brian Mulroney, wherein you will sell off those profit-making parts of the public service to your friends and they will go off and they will make as much money as they can. It will be the people of Ontario who have over the years provided the ability for those private owners to benefit from what rightfully should be the ownership of the public sector.

What you will leave behind will be those parts that you can't peddle out in the marketplace because they don't as easily lend themselves to making a profit. Then, of course, step two will be that in a few years you will stand up and say: "We have to make further cuts in those areas. Why? Well, they aren't cost-effective, they aren't cost-efficient. It costs us too much money to keep them going."

That, of course, will lead to those services being denied to the Ontarians who are benefiting from them, very similar to what's happening here by deregulating and by denying the right of Ontarians to demand from those bus companies that are lucky enough to get a licence that they must also provide service in areas that are not necessarily profit-making but are areas that contain citizens who are entitled to decent public transportation, that they must provide that. You will be eliminating that when you move to full deregulation.

I understand and respect that's not what this bill is, but it is very much the tip of the iceberg and it ties in very much to that. That ultimately is what you're going to do. You in effect will leave probably hundreds of thousands of Ontarians without a service they now have, one, because it fits your philosophy of how you think all public service ought to run—like a business, case closed, with no other consideration—and secondly, for \$450,000, which of course is the price of the board that you're eliminating.

I believe at the end of the day there will be all the evidence necessary to prove that the arguments we're making around this are accurate. Unfortunately, for an awful lot of Ontarians it will be too late; it will be too late because they've lost their service. The seniors who will be affected, the students who will be affected, people looking for work who will be affected, will have lost something, and whether the genie can be put back in the

bottle remains to be seen, but we know how difficult those things are.

This is very much something where there's one opportunity here to preserve an important part of our transportation system in a country and province that's so vast, and yet if we lose the moment, and unfortunately, with the majority government you have, we will, the ability to repair that damage remains somewhat in doubt.

1750

I want to move now to what will happen as a result of deregulation in terms of safety. I've heard the government talk and government members read their prepared texts from the political spin doctors out of the ministers' and Premier's offices about the fact that there will not be any effect on the safety in this industry and that, "Don't worry, we can count on the Tories to not only maintain it but, by gosh, they'll be improving it and making it even stronger."

Mr Preston: No question, sir.

Mr Christopherson: I hear the member in the back benches saying, "No question." Let's take a look at their track record.

One of the most important safety issues, in my opinion, is workplace safety. What's the track record been there? Cut, gouge, attack, eliminate everything except actually make the workplace safer for workers. The opposite of what they say is what they do.

Anyone in the labour movement who has experience with what I'm talking about and has been watching what's happening with health and safety issues and WCB and labour legislation, like your anti-worker Bill 7, and what you're going to do to the WCB when the Jackson report hits and guts that, I would say to those people to take that experience of this government and apply it to this industry and ask, do you honestly believe this government is going to make our roads safer at the same time that they're getting out of the way and letting as much money be made in this industry, and any benefit to the public becomes an extremely low consideration, if a consideration at all?

What will happen? We know that first of all there will be quite a number of bankruptcies. This will happen; it has happened in every industry that's been deregulated that we can measure, and you can expect that it's going to happen here. I said earlier, in response to one of the other government member's speeches, what I expected would happen when those companies are replaced by the new companies that this government seems to be so proudly planning to point to, in every likelihood, given the way you've changed the labour laws and the way you've approached the rights of working people to receive decent pay and decent protection, is that we'd see lower wages in this industry.

I suspect that under Bill 7, where you've made it much more difficult for unions to organize, we'll see a lower rate of unionization, which I know brings a smile to every Tory's face. Unfortunately, that means fewer and fewer Ontarians will have a union they can look to and work with and be a part of that will assist them in getting their fair share and making sure their rights, whatever little rights you leave in legislation, are protected. I believe that will happen.

I also believe there will be more and more pressure to skirt the issue of safety, not deliberately by evil people who get up in the morning wanting to make the roads more dangerous but by people like yourselves, I say to the government members, who see virtually everything as a business case—not that that isn't important, but it's not the only thing when we're talking about government policy, public safety, and in this case the operation of a private enterprise that uses public roadways and becomes part and parcel of the safety of our roads. I predict that the pressure to find every dollar after they've squeezed it out of the workers will move them into that area.

If you have any doubts, look at the questions that are being raised around the airline industry in the United States. Look what's happening there as there are incredible increases in the incidence of airline accidents and the severity of them.

They're all rolling their eyes like this doesn't happen. That's the reality of what's going on when you deregulate, and I suggest the same sort of thing will show itself here. We'll wait and see because we have no choice, because we don't have the experience yet, but I'm quite prepared to stand by the fact that as this unfolds and as you change this industry and make it worse in terms of public service and public benefit, that indeed will be the case.

Let me close my remarks by commenting on the issue of the environment, because public transportation is an important part of environmental protection, of the environmental concern that people have, and of course if indeed the economy ever starts to get a little better, we will begin to see that come back up.

Again, look at the record. You've only been there 10 months and what's your record on the environment? Public service is a key part of the environment. Deregulation, we predict and we suggest, and experts in the field are saying, will result in fewer routes to an awful lot of our communities. That is going to have to mean either citizens are all but stranded in a community or they're going to have to use private vehicles which will increase the number of cars on the road, and that will of course affect the environment.

When we look at the track record of this government in the 10 months that you've been in office, we've seen a virtual attack, through Bill 20, on the environmental protections that have been put in place, ironically enough, in large part started by previous Tory governments. But in your interest to serve the developers and to make the way clear for them no matter what, you have changed the planning process and an awful lot of those environmental protections are gone.

While I suggest to you that the environment is an important part of this issue, I don't expect you to accept that. I don't expect you to believe that. And unfortunately, I don't even expect you to care about that, because I think you showed your true colours under Bill 20, and if you talk to any environmentalist in this province, they will tell you that each of you has been a party to dismantling protection of our environment that has been there for decades, getting stronger with every government. With one stroke of the pen, one vote, one bill passed, Bill 20, you've eliminated all of that, and you really don't seem to care too much about it.

Mr Stockwell: We don't believe it.

Mr Christopherson: The member for Etobicoke West says, "We don't believe you." I sat in on a lot of those hearings on Bill 20, and let me tell you, there shouldn't be a doubt in your mind, and I would caution the member to be very careful because this is pretty straightforward. There will be environmental damage that will be provable that would not have happened under previous legislation; I virtually guarantee you that.

Talk to any of the environmentalists, and I'm not talking the hard-line stuff. I say to those people who are very reasonable, who understand there has to be a balance between development and environment, as surely as we are finished here in four minutes, there will be damage to the environment. As surely as we will be finished here in four minutes, and I will be done in less than that—as surely as that will happen, I believe that while this deregulation of the bus industry is not the be-all and end-all, it is yet one more piece of negative legislation, regulation and program that this government brings forward that somewhere in Ontario makes life a little less enjoyable and drops the quality of life for yet another group of Ontarians.

Unfortunately, we see every day here in the House one step, one piece of legislation after another, a relentless attack on the quality of life, all in the interest of providing your wealthy friends with a tax cut that will cost the things that make this a great place to live and that unfortunately won't be fully seen until the end of your term. The good thing about that is it will be in time to make sure you are indeed turfed out in the next election, and that's the only silver lining to your entire agenda. Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Monday 29 April 1996

Lundi 29 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 avril 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My statement is directed to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, you've stated publicly from the beginning that you were going to create a crisis in education. Since that statement, you have systematically pitted school boards against teachers throughout the province, no matter what the cost to students.

As a result of your vague and irresponsible instructions found in the toolkit, we are witnessing unprecedented cuts to the classroom, thousands of teachers receiving layoff notices and essential programs being cut from school curriculums. Clearly, the only result your education policy is having is the destruction of small school boards throughout the province.

Over the last few days I have met with school board officials in my riding who did not make your list for assistance through the general legislative grant program. Boards such as the Kenora District Roman Catholic Separate School Board are at a loss to understand how you came up with your list.

Because of your cuts in funding, this board has issued layoff notices to 55 of 78 teachers. This represents 68% of the teaching staff of this board. Does the Minister of Education have any idea what an announcement such as this has on a small community such as Kenora?

The education of our children is vital. Ontario residents have had enough of the minister's lack of understanding and concern for their education. Parents, teachers, school board officials and even students are aware that changes need to be made in the system, but not at any cost; certainly not at the cost of our children's education.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I've had the opportunity over the past couple of weeks to meet with representatives of the forestry industry, and the tale they tell of this government in regard to its response to the latest countervail on behalf of the United States when it comes to lumber and the action taken by this government not to represent that industry speaks volumes about this government.

Imagine if you will Ontario, a jurisdiction that sees forestry as one of the largest and most important sectors of its economy. You would think the Ontario Mike Harris

government would be there at the table, sitting down with the federal government and saying, "We are speaking on behalf of the Ontario Forestry Association and the industry."

No, quite to the contrary. The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and the Minister of Natural Resources are nowhere to be seen, and neither is the Premier.

We are finding out now that the federal government itself is going to be making decisions in regard to how much lumber will be allowed to be sold by way of quota and deciding which mills are going to get how much wood, and the Ontario government, which supposedly represents the industry, is nowhere to be found.

I say to this government directly, you have a responsibility as the government of Ontario to speak out on behalf of the forestry industry of this province, and if you are not going to do it, step aside and allow those who will, the New Democratic Party, to do it for you.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise in the House to inform all members about the concerns that a number of my constituents have regarding the recent escalation in the price of gasoline.

Recently a local Petro-Canada gas station allowed a number of local people to conduct a rally at its facility to protest against gasoline companies gouging consumers at the pumps.

The average price of a barrel of oil is presently at a four-year low when averaged over the entire year. Investment experts in the price of crude oil have indicated that a moderate increase in the price of one barrel of oil should not affect consumers at all. They've also indicated that a small increase should not affect consumers for at least six months.

People are increasingly concerned about 10- and 15-cent-per-litre price hikes. Ask anyone travelling on long weekends about price gouging. Tourism is too important to Ontario to have visitors travelling to other regions simply because of high gas prices. They are asking for a fair price based on the realistic price of gasoline as determined by the marketplace. Let the market dictate the price of gasoline and stop gouging the consumers of Ontario.

AIDS TREATMENT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): As you are aware, last year Health Canada approved the drug 3TC in combination with AZT for the treatment of HIV-AIDS. It is yet to be added, however, to the Ontario drug benefit schedule.

For people living with HIV-AIDS, this drug can offer them hope of extending and improving their lives. The reported cost of this drug is \$4.20 per pill, translating into a yearly cost of over \$3,000. As you're also aware, HIV-AIDS is often a disease of poverty. The AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay reports that many of its clients are on social assistance, which puts them on a very limited and fixed income. Unless it is added to the schedule, there is no possible way that people who need the benefits of 3TC will have access to it.

Please note that 3TC was approved in combination with AZT, which, by the way, is on the schedule. Put yourself in the position of a doctor forced to tell a patient that there is a new drug on the market that has been approved for use in the fight against HIV-AIDS but that the cost must be borne by the patient. Put yourself in the position of the patient receiving this news.

The battle against HIV-AIDS is one that we cannot afford to lose. The more than 15,000 people across this province who have contracted this virus deserve more than that. The people in my riding living with AIDS deserve more than that.

I'd like to finish by commending the AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay and all such organizations across the province for their dedicated and compassionate work in our communities and to ask this government to hear their appeals for the addition of this drug to the Ontario drug benefit schedule.

1340

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): In a short while we will all, from all parties, take a moment to recognize yesterday, April 28, as the day of mourning for workers injured or killed on the job, and we know at that time that the minister will say, as she does, all the right things about health and safety and about accident prevention in the workplace, but we also know the reality, that this government has an agenda which means to take away rights and benefits workers have and protection they're entitled to in the workplace.

When the minister comments today I would ask her to recognize the fact that in the gallery with us is Karl Crevar, from my home town of Hamilton, who also happens to be the president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups. When I travel the province and talk to those various groups about the killing of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, the cutting of funding to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre, the attack on the WCB the minister responsible for gutting the WCB has undertaken, and when we talk about cuts in funding for mandatory training of health and safety officers inside the plant, people like Karl Crevar and others know that this government is no friend of workers and does not take seriously the issue of workplace health and safety, and their agenda proves it.

EID-UL-ADHA

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim, in the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. I rise to call to the attention of all members of

this House that this past weekend marked an event of religious and ceremonial importance to the Muslim community of Ontario.

Eid-ul-Adha, the feast of sacrifice, recalls Abraham's—in Arabic, Ibrahim's—test of obedience when God ordered him to sacrifice his son, through an angel telling Abraham that his son's life be spared and then allowing a lamb to be sacrificed in his place.

In imitation of Abraham's submission to the will of God, millions of Muslims around the globe journeyed this weekend as pilgrims to El-Kaaba in Mecca. They walked seven times around the holy site in prayer, then travelled to the mountain where the prophet delivered one of his final messages to the followers.

Ontarians of all religions, cultures and backgrounds can learn a great deal from the sense of spiritual and personal renewal, and renewal in the commitment to community and family, which are the proud hallmark of the religious holiday of followers of Islam.

On this very special week in the Muslim month, I would like to extend our government's best wishes to the Muslim community of Ontario. Eid-Mubarak.

DUNAI UKRAINIAN FOLK ENSEMBLE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On the weekend of Saturday, April 27, and Sunday, April 28, the Dunai Ukrainian Folk Ensemble celebrated its 30th anniversary in St Catharines with a gala dinner-dance and concert.

I was pleased to be in attendance at the Sean O'Sullivan Theatre at Brock University as a spectacular performance was presented to a sold-out auditorium. Outstanding dancers, from beginners to the Dunai alumni, thrilled the enthusiastic audience with a breathtaking performance of agility, skill and stamina under the direction of some of the best choreographers in the country.

Beautiful voices in solo, trio and chorus entertained the appreciative crowd that filled every seat in the theatre. The Sunday afternoon concert brought back fond memories for performers and spectators alike, including choreographer Orest Samitz.

Thirty years ago, as Canada prepared for its centennial celebrations, the Ukrainian community of St Catharines set about to organize a dance group. Their goal was to teach Ukrainian dance to their children, to share their culture with fellow Canadians and to celebrate Canada's 100th birthday. The group formed was the Dunai Ukrainian Folk Ensemble. Since that time they have performed throughout Canada and the United States, the most memorable performances being for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

Over the years, hundreds of young people have danced with Dunai. This weekend we, our entire community, celebrated our special contribution to St Catharines.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): It was my privilege yesterday to participate in the day of mourning ceremony in Sudbury. This ceremony, organized by our labour council, allows our community to honour those working men and women who have been injured, died or

who have suffered industrial diseases in Ontario's workplaces.

This year's event was marked by tragedy and outrage. Our community is mourning the death of 49-year-old Raymond Courchesne of Alban, who was killed last Wednesday at Inco's Copper Cliff South mine. He was found pinned under a rockbolting machine. He had worked over 30 years for Inco and had never lost time due to a workplace injury. His death followed on the heels of the recent court case in which Inco was fined \$525,000 in connection with the deaths of three miners in three different accidents.

Our community is also outraged that at this time the Solicitor General is proposing to amend the Coroners Act so that inquests are no longer mandatory for mining and construction deaths. The trade union movement fought long and hard to change laws to force mandatory inquests. They allow us to identify how a tragedy occurred and to make recommendations for change so no one else dies under similar circumstances, and they bring closure to the tragedy for the families who sit and suffer and wonder what went wrong and why.

Our community is calling upon the Solicitor General to immediately signal that mandatory inquests for death in the mining and construction industries will continue. On behalf of USWA Local 6500, Mine Mill-CAW Local 598 and regional council, I urge the minister to do the right thing today.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): In mid-December this government announced that some 76 patients with acquired brain injuries would be repatriated to Ontario. At that time, due to decisions by the previous government, these patients were being treated in the United States.

On Thursday, April 11, 1996, the honourable member for Perth asked the Minister of Health for an update on the repatriation of acquired brain injury patients. The minister at that time reported that nine patients had already returned home from the United States. I am pleased to report today that one of those patients who has been repatriated is a constituent of mine.

I have learned from the family of this patient how unsatisfactory it was to have their husband and father in the United States for treatment and how pleased they are to have him home. The patient's wife began a long process of advocating for the services her husband needed in February 1994. When it appeared that no residential program in Ontario could meet her husband's needs, he was transferred to the US.

His special needs have placed many strains on his family, and being separated from him by such a distance has been especially difficult. Gratefully, he arrived back in Ontario last week, and his wife and three young children will once again be able to re-establish their relationships.

I would like to thank the minister and his staff for the hard work they have done to provide this patient and other ABI patients with the best possible care and to reunite them with their families. Clearly, this government

is reinvesting its health care dollars where the needs are clear—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'd like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Mr U.N.B. Rao, deputy commissioner of police from New Delhi, India. Welcome to our guest.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BUDGET

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I am pleased to announce that I will be presenting our government's first budget, for the fiscal year 1996-97, on Tuesday, May 7 at 4 pm.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I appreciate that lengthy statement.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): We haven't had time to analyse it yet.

Mr Phillips: That's right. I'll just deal with the highlights of the statement and leave the detail for later.

Obviously, we're looking forward to the budget. Forgive me for saying I'm sorry you didn't present one last year, for the first time in the history of the province, but we are looking forward to it.

For our caucus, probably the primary litmus test, the thing we'll be looking for most in the budget, is the impact on jobs. We were very disappointed in your fiscal statement, in that that document—this is the government's own document—actually shows that the number of people out of work in the province of Ontario in 1996 goes up from 1995, and then in 1997 it increases over 1996. Of all the things in the fiscal statement, that was probably the thing we were most concerned and most disappointed about, the fact that we continue to see the number of people out of work in the province of Ontario growing. Frankly, we're convinced this budget will not show that, and we will be looking first and foremost at the impact on jobs.

1350

Clearly the second thing is, and there's absolutely no question, the budget will contain the tax cut. We have no doubt of that. We have no doubt that when the minister announces it here, you'll all be on your feet. This will be well cued, a standing ovation. We have no doubt you're all scheduled for your service club speeches and the chamber of commerce speeches and what not.

The questions, however, we'll ask about the tax cut are the following.

The first, Minister, as you point out in this document, is that the debt of the province will go up over the next three years by \$20 billion. Those are your numbers. The debt of the province of Ontario will increase by \$20

billion. For every family of Ontario out there watching this now, your debt, the amount that you owe, will go up by \$8,000, and as the government is anxious to and loves to point out, we're spending \$1 million an hour to pay the interest on the debt. We all know that. Young people in the province wake up with nightmares about it. You've done a great job of convincing people.

Hon Mr Eves: Why?

Mr Phillips: I love this. The minister says, "Why?" It's because none of the caucus realized that the Minister of Finance, when he was in the government before, approved the single largest increase in the personal income tax rate in the history of the province. That's when he was there before.

I carry this around with me. I've been provoked. For everybody out there, this is the last time a Conservative government balanced the budget in the province of Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): In 1969.

Mr Phillips: That's 1969, as my colleague points out. So I have very little respect for your ability to manage the finances of the province.

If things are so difficult—and they are—that you are going to have to increase the debt of the province by \$20 billion, how in the world can the people of Ontario afford a tax cut that will cost you, in lost revenue, \$10 billion? You're going to add \$20 billion to the debt of the province and you're going to provide a \$10-billion tax cut, all of it borrowed money. Every penny of that tax cut is borrowed money.

The people of Ontario will be applauding you, saying, "Thank you very much for the tax cut," and now they'll realize that it's a bit of a fairy tale. We're getting the tax cut, the people of Ontario, all with borrowed money. You'll be out there saying, "Why, we've done a great job giving you a tax cut," and the people of Ontario will realize that you are increasing the debt of this province by \$20 billion over the next three years. Those are your numbers. They might be slightly different in the budget, but those are those numbers that you provided a mere few months ago. You are going to provide a \$10-billion tax break and you're going to borrow every penny of that, every penny of it.

I will say further that if you're making \$150,000 in this province, when this tax cut is implemented you are going to get a \$6,000 tax break. So all the people out there who are seeing their hospital beds closing, who are seeing their classroom teachers being laid off, who are seeing fewer and fewer police should recognize why that is happening: to fund a \$6,000 tax cut for people making \$150,000 in this province. There's an issue of fairness that we will be looking for in the budget too.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On behalf of my party, let me say to the finance minister that we are delighted to hear that he is finally coming forward with the budget, although it probably confuses a lot of people in the province to hear that there hasn't been a budget since 1994, that this government has made the most severe spending cuts, the most severe program cuts ever in the history of the province without ever coming up with a budget that shows the cumulative effect of those cuts and without balancing those cuts off.

This government is very fond of talking about the fact that this province has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. That's why they blithely forgo revenue from a number of different areas, because they are trying to fool the people of Ontario into believing that the tax cut, which is the cornerstone of their entire platform, will not cost them money.

To that end, they have gone through a series of exercises, three different announcements around spending cuts. The first was on July 21, which cut \$1.9 billion from the expenditures, and the biggest one of that of course was the 22% cut in welfare payments. Then on November 29, the 1995 Fiscal and Economic Statement cut another \$4.5 billion to \$5.5 billion out of the existing budget of the province, and we believe and our figures show that those cuts will annualize to approximately \$8 billion when all that was announced in November is finally implemented. And then, included in that November statement was the \$1.6-billion place-holder the government had, which rolled out in the so-called business plans that were present in this Legislature a couple of weeks ago.

Those business plans were supposed to tell the people of Ontario exactly where cuts were happening and what the effect of those cuts would be on services and on jobs. Yet in this House we heard the finance minister say, first of all, there had been no impact statements done around those business plans, and then when pressed he said in fact in some cases there was no business plan, that the details were not there, that he couldn't present the details because the details were not complete.

To date, this government has shown itself to be so concerned with getting to the tax cut they promised as part of their platform that they have tried a series of smoke-and-mirror statements to try and convince the people of Ontario that somehow when they do come down with the budget it will be a good-news budget.

There's no other reason for this rollout of cuts well ahead of a budget except for the very strong effort that this finance minister is making to try and tell the people of Ontario that when he presents a budget, it will be a good-news budget.

The government needs to be aware that the people of Ontario are a bit more sophisticated than that, that the people of Ontario understand that this government has cut and cut and cut so that in the long run they can announce, as if it were good news, the fact that they will be borrowing an additional \$20 billion on top of the existing deficit to pay for a tax cut.

People in this province are not so stupid that they do not understand that when a government cuts the revenues coming into the province by up to \$8 billion a year they need to cut spending, they need to cut jobs to try and make this look like good news.

We will be reminding the people of the province that if this finance minister attempts in his budget to present it as good news and to separate the budget from the bad news, from the severe cuts that have happened to services and to jobs in this province, he is not going to get away with it. He is underestimating the intelligence and the integrity of the people of Ontario, and he is underestimat-

ing the response that they will have to a shell game such as he's trying to present.

When he announces the date of the budget, as though this is a big fanfare, he needs to be aware that it is good news that we're going to finally have a budget, but most of the cuts and most of the problems have been hidden by this finance minister in a series of statements away from a budget, and we will not be fooled.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from Italy headed by the Honourable Domenico Maroscia, Premier of the Basilicata region of Italy. Welcome to our guests.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent for statements with regard—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): —to members' statements on the day of mourning for injured workers.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

DAY OF MOURNING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Yesterday and today working people around Ontario have paused and will pause and observe a day of mourning for our fellow citizens who have been injured or killed on the job.

More than 2,200 people have been killed at work or died as the result of an occupational disease over the last eight years. Over that same period, more than three million claims have been registered with the Workers' Compensation Board. In 1995, there were 250 job-related deaths registered with the board. More than 375,000 claims were filed in that year.

The cost to our economy of this human tragedy amounts to literally billions of dollars. More important, the cost to our friends and neighbours who are the victims, and to their families, is immeasurable.

Over the last 10 years, much progress has been made in reducing lost-time accidents, injuries and deaths. We in Ontario must continue to pursue a policy which will contribute to a reduction in the incidence of workplace injuries and fatalities. We must also ensure that our fellow citizens who suffer the misfortune of a workplace injury continue to be fairly and adequately compensated.

Each of us knows someone who has been injured or killed in the workplace. Just last week, Raymond Courchesne, with more than 30 years' mining experience, was killed in Sudbury.

All of us in our party join with our colleagues in the Legislature as we observe a moment and pay tribute to those who have died, and we vow to continue the fight for the living.

1400

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Today we commemorate one of the most important days on the calendar for working people in Ontario. This day is set aside to honour the memory of workers who have died

from occupational disease or from accidents on the job, and to rededicate ourselves to eliminating injuries and fatalities from Ontario's workplaces.

Workers gathered yesterday in my home town of Hamilton and in communities all across Ontario to share a moment of silence, grief and commitment.

The choice of April 28 for this commemoration is full of meaning itself. This date marks the anniversary of passage of Ontario's first Workers' Compensation Act in 1914. This historic compromise has served both workers and employers well, but it has never been possible to take this achievement for granted. So much remains to be done to make sure that workplace health and safety has the top priority it deserves with workers, employers and the government.

The day of mourning has been observed in Ontario since 1988, when a resolution introduced by former Premier Bob Rae, then Leader of the Opposition, passed this House unanimously. The federal Parliament in 1991 declared April 28 as a national day of mourning. The idea has also spread to the United States and Australia, where unions are urging official observance in those countries.

In 1995, according to the Workers' Compensation Board, there were 218 deaths recorded from workplace accidents and occupational disease, a slight increase from 207 deaths in 1994. A total of 376,186 claims were recorded at the WCB last year, of which 117,790 were serious enough to cause lost time from work. In fact, each year about six billion working days are lost by injured workers in Ontario. This is an unacceptable toll for our province and its economy, but even more for the families and loved ones of the workers who needlessly put their bodies and lives on the line.

When we think of more than 200 workplace deaths or hundreds of thousands of injuries, we begin to live more in the realm of statistics than of human tragedy. That's why it's fitting to reflect for a moment on a particular example of this plague of death and injury such as what happened recently in my home town of Hamilton.

William Allan Morden, a garbage collector who had worked for the city for 20 years, died in hospital after being hit by a pickup truck and pinned against the rear of his garbage truck. Our thoughts are with his two sons and with all his colleagues and loved ones who have suffered this loss.

The Ministry of Labour has recommended alternative methods of collection or modification to the trucks that could make sure no one in the future is injured or killed as a result of this type of accident.

The least we owe to workers like William Morden or Ray Courchesne, who was killed last week in Sudbury, or Sean Kells, and to their friends and families is our fullest commitment to the best possible workplace health and safety training and to the elimination of workplace hazards. My colleagues and I in the NDP caucus are pleased to join all members of the House in a minute of silence to honour the memory of those fallen workers.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Yesterday and today across Ontario and across Canada, workers have joined together in remembrance of those who have lost their lives or suffered injury or illness in

the workplace. This is a day of mourning. It is a day to reflect on the terrible human costs of all workplace illnesses, injuries and fatalities and the tragic impact they have on the families who are impacted.

As well, it is a day for the government, for labour and for management to reaffirm our shared commitment to the prevention of illness and injury, for health and safety is not a partisan issue; it is a human issue. We must acknowledge that partnerships are the key to success in developing and delivering the health and safety programs and training that will prevent future illness and injury.

It's for this reason that I want to congratulate Paul Kells who vowed to honour his 19-year-old son's death by trying to ensure that another death would not occur and for establishing the Safe Communities Foundation. This unique public and private sector partnership has as its goal the reduction of injuries and illness in the workplace, in the home and in the community. Certainly this supports the government's objective of setting performance standards to make sure that we do achieve progressive reductions in injuries and illness in Ontario each year.

However, much more remains to be done and will be done as we strive to improve our legislation and our programs. I would like to commend the labour movement for its initiative in establishing this annual day of mourning and I would encourage everyone in this House and outside of this House to continue to work cooperatively in order that we can achieve our common goal of preventing injuries and illness.

At this moment, I would ask everyone to stand for a moment of silence in order that we can remember those who were injured or lost their lives, and let us again commit ourselves to continue the pursuit of workplace health and safety.

The House observed one minute's silence.

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with his announcement today on the budget. I think people in Ontario appreciate that we have a debt and a deficit problem and probably would agree it's our number one fiscal problem. Jobs are our number one economic problem, but this is our number one fiscal problem.

I think that's the reason the government has had some support for its expenditure cuts, not necessarily universal support but support for it. But people are starting to ask this question: If the deficit and debt is such a huge problem, and it is, how can we afford the tax cut? As you point out in this document, you plan to add about \$20 billion to our debt over the next three years. That's your fiscal plan. That's the most recent plan we have from you. That's the plan you have outlined for us. In the budget, I gather, it will be somewhat less than that, but that's the number you have given us. That's about \$8,000 a family in brand-new debt in this province.

At the same time, it is the government's plan to proceed with a very substantial tax cut. We realize the government may very well be popular on that, but you are going to add \$10 billion of that \$20-billion debt as a result of the tax cut. Those are your own numbers. The Premier shakes his head, but they are their own numbers that he ran on during the campaign, the direct fiscal impact of the Common Sense Revolution; not my numbers, your numbers, the numbers we assume we have to use.

My question to the Minister of Finance is this: If the debt and deficit are such huge problems, how can we afford a \$10-billion tax cut, all with borrowed money, when we have this enormous debt and deficit problem?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): First of all, the honourable member for Scarborough-Agincourt makes it sound as if we are going to go out and borrow an extra \$20 billion because we're doing this and this. He knows full well that the reason for the increase in the debt is because there is an accumulated debt now in the province of Ontario of \$100 billion. Quite frankly, if we had continued with the same spending habits and methods of the two previous administrations, by the year 2000 the figure for interest on the debt alone would be \$20 billion a year.

Out of a budget of some \$42 billion for program spending, how many hospital beds would be open then? How many senior citizens would we be helping? How many children and disadvantaged people could we afford to help if we continued along the lines of the two previous administrations?

Any actions we have taken are to deal with that expenditure appetite of the two previous administrations, to get our expenditures under control in the province of Ontario, to balance the budget by the year 2000-2001, which, by the way, we will be doing, and then we can start to turn this ship around for the betterment of future generations of Ontarians.

Mr Phillips: Eventually you're going to have to answer this argument, this question, and to an extent you confirmed my worst suspicions. You never answered the question and you pointed out that the interest on the debt is a huge problem for all of us.

My question is quite simple, though. If in fact it is—and it is, and the numbers you quoted are your numbers. You're going to borrow an extra \$20 billion. You're going to add \$20 billion to the debt over the next three years, and over half of that is a result of your tax cut. These are your own numbers. You say your tax cut is going to cost \$10 billion, and I would appreciate—and the people of Ontario would appreciate—an answer to the question, because you refused to answer it.

If the debt is such a huge problem and the interest on the debt is such a huge problem, tell the people of Ontario how we can afford a \$10-billion tax cut, using all borrowed money. This is all borrowed money. You are going to go and borrow the \$20 billion, bring it in and put \$10 billion out in the form of a tax cut. Tell us how we can afford a \$10-billion tax cut.

Hon Mr Eves: There is one thing that apparently the honourable member and his party don't seem to understand and that is that 8.8% of Ontarians are unemployed

today. Why are they unemployed? They are unemployed because of the policies of the two previous administrations, in large part.

We not only have to get our own house in order, we have to also allow hard-working, honest, taxpaying Ontarians to keep more of the money they have earned—not us here in this place—so they can spend it as they see fit, which in turn—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: I know they find this hard to believe—will stimulate the economy, create more employment. There'll be more people working, more people paying taxes, revenues will go up and people will feel as if they've been treated in a fair and equitable fashion and that there's some hope and opportunity in Ontario.

Mr Phillips: We'll be very interested to debate. Talk about fairness—I will just say that hospitals are closing in this province, classrooms teachers are being laid off, we're having fewer police in this province, you are cutting the agricultural budget. And why? Because with this tax cut, if you're making \$150,000 in this province, you are going to get a \$6,000 tax break after the fair share health levy. Not before the fair share health levy; after the fair share health levy. So it is fairness.

I think the people of Ontario realize that the government is going to have to go out and borrow every penny of this. You are going to borrow the money to give people making \$150,000 a year a \$6,000 tax break. That's what fairness is all about. And why? You are cutting expenditures, by your own admission, far deeper than you promised in the campaign, in fact over a third deeper than you promised in the campaign, but you have decided that you're not going to touch the tax break. You're going to cut far deeper in health care, education, policing, law enforcement and agriculture to fund this tax break.

How is it that you have planned to cut expenditures at least a third deeper than you said during the campaign, but you can still afford a tax cut that will give someone making \$150,000 a year \$6,000 more in take-home pay?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member knows full well that the reason there is \$2 billion approximately more in expenditure reductions is because of the fact that the previous administration had miscalculated revenues and expenditures and we had to address that and we did, after being in office for three and a half weeks, on July 21.

Second, we can't afford not to allow Ontarians to keep some of their hard-earned money.

I will tell you about the approach of previous administrations. Under the Rae government, for example, which increased taxation by \$4 billion overall, in the year 1990-91 their tax revenues were \$33.6 billion. Then they raised taxes \$4 billion, and in the fiscal year 1993-94 they got \$31.8 billion, almost \$2 billion less in revenue by increasing taxes by \$4 billion. We obviously know that theory doesn't work.

Let me also tell you about the state of Michigan. The state of Michigan, in the last four years, has decreased taxes 21 times. In 1991 their unemployment rate was 8.8% and today it is 4.4%, and their tax revenues went from \$3.8 billion to \$5 billion. Wouldn't that be terrible if the same thing happened here in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I can only assume that the Conservative collective memory only begins in 1985, so the minister can't remember the largest tax increases—

The Speaker: Who's your question to?

Mrs McLeod: My question is for the Premier.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, while you were out of town last week, your Minister of Education and Training gave some rather unsatisfactory responses on questions that we raised in the House. I wanted to ask you about these responses.

One of the issues that we raised was an agreement that your minister forced on the Metropolitan Toronto School Board. The agreement allowed your government to raid the property tax base of Metro Toronto for some \$65 million to help to pay for that income tax cut that will be in your budget.

I'm sure you're aware that when we raised this issue with the minister on Wednesday he denied the existence of any agreement at all. When we produced a copy of the signed agreement on Thursday, he switched gears faster than Jacques Villeneuve could. He said that whereas on Wednesday there had not been an agreement, on Thursday there was an agreement, but since he hasn't been able to deliver on his part of the deal he considered that agreement to be null and void and now he needs a new one.

He also said, or tried to say, that the deal was only about making social contract cuts permanent. Well, clearly that was part of another deal and this was another \$65 million that he was taking from Metro Toronto taxpayers.

Clearly the minister was trying to hide the fact that your government is planning to raid the local tax base in both Metro Toronto and Ottawa, and the minister was trying to hide the fact that this was already happening.

I ask you today, does this type of behaviour meet your standard of conduct for ministers?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm not sure why the answers weren't satisfactory to the member on Thursday, but I'm sure they will be from the Minister of Education and Training today.

1420

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I would be delighted once again today to inform the Leader of the Opposition that this government intends to reduce the costs of education outside of the classroom, and we intend to do that in partnership with the boards of education across the province. It may startle the Leader of the Opposition to believe that people would work together to find a more affordable system for the taxpayers of Ontario while still looking for high levels of student achievement, because that's what students and parents and educators expect in this province. It may startle the Leader of the Opposition that that's possible, but that is what this government is doing and that is what we expect of our education partners across the province.

I believe the Leader of the Opposition has already said that, yes, this government fully acknowledges that it

wishes to enter into an agreement with Metropolitan Toronto—we have said that on many occasions—and when we get the permission in Bill 34, we intend to have open negotiations, honest negotiations, with our partners in education and arrive at an agreement. As I said last week, when that agreement is arrived at, I'll be proud and pleased to lay it on the table here in the Legislature.

Mrs McLeod: I am more than a little surprised that the Premier was not prepared to defend his minister. Maybe that's because there is no way this Premier could have any consistency in his own statements and still defend what this minister is doing.

I would remind the Premier, and perhaps the Minister of Education should be aware, that on June 14, 1993, when the now Premier was in opposition, he raised exactly this same issue with the former Minister of Education. When the NDP announced in the social contract that it was raiding the property tax base in Metro Toronto, this Premier, then an opposition leader, spoke out very forcibly against it, and I have his words right here in Hansard. What the words in Hansard say is that the Premier, at that time, was very concerned that the New Democratic Party government would do exactly what his Minister of Education has now done: threaten the board that if they don't pay up, he would find other ways to take money from local property taxpayers.

I guess I have to ask the Minister of Education, since the Premier has referred the question, do you have any idea, Minister, why your Premier has changed since he spoke out against raiding local property taxes when the NDP did it? And can you tell us why he as well as you now seems to be in favour of taking some \$75 million from local taxpayers in Toronto and Ottawa?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can clear the dilemma up for the Leader of the Opposition, because now I understand why there is a dilemma for her. This government has not threatened anyone, nor does it intend to.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, I understand, because you have repeatedly said in this House that there was nothing forceable about the deal you would make with Metro Toronto or Ottawa, that the legislation you were bringing in would simply allow the boards of Toronto and Ottawa to voluntarily make a contribution towards your government's income tax cut.

But I have to tell you that back in 1993, Mike Harris was very sceptical about why any board would voluntarily write a cheque to the government to help it out of its financial dilemma. In fact, the Premier, who was then an opposition leader, asked the government very specifically what other means the government would use "to extract"—those were the Premier's, then opposition leader's, words—money from the boards.

I want the Premier to know that his minister has found the answer to the question he asked almost three years ago. He has found the means of extracting—and here it is, and the word is exactly the same—first, \$75 million from Metro Toronto and then \$65 million. Minister, are you expecting, given what he has said in the past, that your Premier will now instruct you to stop trying to take property tax dollars from Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa to pay for your income tax cut?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can assure the honourable member opposite that what the Premier expects and what every member of our caucus expects, what all my colleagues expect, is for this ministry and this minister to take on the horrible funding mess that has been left to us by the previous government and the \$100 billion in debt that's been left on top of this province by the previous government.

This ministry and this minister, all my colleagues, expect us to take on these issues and to find a better way, to find a more affordable, higher-quality, more accountable education system. They expect us to do that in the fiscal realities that have been left to this government, with the remnants of the social contract the member opposite brought up in her question earlier. What's expected is a better, fairer education system, a fairer funding system, better value for our taxpayers and better student achievement for the young people of Ontario. That is what my colleagues expect, that is what this Premier expects and that is what we'll deliver on. Thank you.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): If I could just have a few seconds of your time, we have former Speaker Warner in the visitors' gallery today.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the minister without portfolio responsible for gutting the WCB. On this day, when we all stood in the House and recognized the day of mourning, on this day, when we all stood in this House and pledged to recognize the importance of health and safety in the workplace, we had the hypocrisy of you, on behalf of the Mike Harris government, actively putting together a plan that is meant to slash benefits to injured workers.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. That is an unacceptable word. Would the member please withdraw the word "hypocrisy."

Mr Christopherson: Mr Speaker, with respect, I didn't accuse the minister.

The Speaker: Withdraw the word "hypocrisy," please.

Mr Christopherson: If I have said something unparliamentary, I do indeed take it back.

Minister, we have the spectacle of your ministry, on behalf of the Mike Harris government, actively putting together a plan designed solely to slash benefits of injured workers. We know your report is meant to build the case that would somehow try and justify this attack on innocent injured workers, and we also know that much of your report does not hold up to scrutiny.

For example, on page 26 you write, "In Quebec, an employer pays an injured worker's full salary for the first 14 days." I have a copy of a letter that was sent to you on March 9 from the assembly of injured workers of Quebec where they said very bluntly, "This is absolutely wrong," and explained that the WCB in Quebec pays the worker 90% of net just like here in Ontario. Minister, I'd like to know how this mistake happened and what you're planning to do about it.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): I want to thank the member opposite for his question. I want to indicate it is no secret that the WCB has been in severe difficulty for a fairly long period of time. The member opposite sat in the cabinet of a government that undertook reforms that ratcheted down worker benefits in this province, and still the unfunded liability laid at about \$14 billion. The member opposite, while his government was in power, undertook a royal commission to wander about analysing the issues around workers' compensation.

1430

The truth is that decisive action has to be taken, that the unfunded liability is still a serious problem for this province and for the injured workers this fund is there to protect. The member opposite is very much aware that the discussion paper put out for consideration by injured workers, for labour groups in this province, for health care professionals, was an examination of a variety of options to find the best balance and the best solutions for injured workers and employers in this province.

The commitment from the Mike Harris government clearly is to get the Workers' Compensation Board back on a strong financial footing and to produce a balance between those worker benefits and employer affordability so that this province can remain competitive now and into the future.

Mr Christopherson: Mr Speaker, you notice that this is the second time I've asked the minister a question about the accuracy of his report and in both cases he's refused to answer the question.

The last question I asked him on this was about the report that claimed our Ontario rates were higher than American rates. I pointed to a report the federal government had commissioned by KPMG Peat Marwick which makes the case that our rates are competitive with the Americans and in fact are lower than, and he refused to answer that question when I pointed it out to him. I have a third example. In the same letter from the assembly of injured workers of Quebec, they point out that your statement about paying life pensions in lump sums is "absolutely wrong." Minister, that's the second one. They go on to say, "Unfortunately on these two occasions what is written about our system is false."

Minister, when you talk about the finances, we know that the unfunded liability has dropped two years in a row, by over half a billion dollars alone last year. Assets are now up over \$7 billion. I've pointed out three instances where your report is factually incorrect. When will you stand up and admit that report is not an accurate reflection of the facts and it's meant to put up a phoney argument to give you an excuse to slash benefits of injured workers?

The Speaker: The question's been asked.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, admit the truth.

Hon Mr Jackson: The member opposite raises with conjecture concerns about the competitive rate for Ontario with its WCB. I want to apprise the member opposite. The report very carefully selected those American jurisdictions which we trade with, which are closest to our borders, which have a huge impact in auto produc-

tion, like Ohio and Michigan. The member should be fully aware, and I'd be surprised if he isn't, that the Ontario WCB system is constructed and structured on 175% of the average industrial wage, whereas in those jurisdictions we're competing with on a daily basis, for jobs and for exports, in Ohio and in Michigan, our largest trading partner outside Canada, they are calculated on 100% of the industrial wage in the United States.

It tends to lower their rates and ours are considerably higher. Our benefit levels are higher; our calculation and the formula's higher. Quite frankly, the member knows this, but he is sticking to this presumption that these suggestions of how Ontario is less than competitive are not valid. The truth is that the proposals put in this report clearly enunciate data that are shared by all WCBs across Canada and those were the data that were put into this report.

Mr Christopherson: Clearly, this minister has dropped the ball on this particular aspect of what he's been given. This report is not an accurate reflection of the facts. I've made that allegation here today; I've made it before. You refuse to respond. You dance around the issue. The fact of the matter is your report doesn't hang together. The facts are incorrect; the suppositions are incorrect; everything in there that you're trying to create a smokescreen from which you can go after injured workers is a sham.

Karl Crevar is here from the network of injured workers all across Ontario. You tell him right now why it is that you feel you've got the right, based on your report, to go after innocent injured workers. Tell that representative of injured workers right there where you get off going after injured workers.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to share two important pieces of information, not only with the member opposite but also with Karl Crevar, who's in the House today.

You have alluded to the fact that the workers' compensation system in the province of Ontario has had one good, positive performance year, the last half of 1995. The single largest impact that was felt was a \$300-million growth in assessable employment revenue, a growth in payable payroll in this province, predominantly as a result of growth in the auto sector as signalled by the election of this government. The turnaround in the WCB is a growth of \$300 million on employment growth.

The other point that I'll share with the member opposite is that when he was sitting on this side of the House, his government's approach to fixing the WCB was to reduce the unfunded liability of about \$40 billion by \$19 billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to assure the members of this House that the Mike Harris government will approach the reform of the WCB with balance and that under no circumstances will our reduction be any greater. It'll be much less than the \$19 billion that you and the NDP disfranchised injured workers from—

The Speaker: Order. The question has been answered. New question?

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Finance, but he appears to have left, so I'll stand it down until he returns.

INQUESTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I attended the day of mourning in Sudbury. The theme of the day was, "Remember the dead but fight for the living." With that in mind, I have a question to the Solicitor General.

On Wednesday, cabinet received the Ontario Law Reform Commission's report on the law of coroners, and discussed it, I presume. On April 15, the Minister of Labour said that she would be meeting with you. Have you met with the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Attorney General to discuss the recommendations found in this report? Could you please inform the House what the recommendation of the commission is regarding mandatory coroners' inquests and do you agree with it?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The member is correct with respect to the fact that the report was tabled with cabinet this past week, but we have not had an opportunity to meet to discuss its recommendations.

Mr Bartolucci: I find that answer so distasteful in the light of what we're recognizing today. Recommendation 24—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

Mr Bartolucci: If you haven't had time to read it and discuss it, let me tell you what it says: "Inquests should continue to be mandatory when a person dies while employed on a construction site or in a mine pit or quarry." It should be mandatory.

Again to the Solicitor General, do you agree with the recommendation and, if so, will you reconsider your ill-advised, ill-timed and illogical decision not to have mandatory inquests?

Hon Mr Runciman: I indicated earlier with respect to the changes to the Coroners Act that they will require the involvement of this Legislature. There will be public hearings through that process, and if there are legitimate concerns, they will be heard and recognized by this government.

Mr Bartolucci: Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

The Speaker: There's nothing out of order.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On this particular day, to get a non-answer to a very serious question—

The Speaker: Order. Will the member take his seat. I'll have to name the member if he won't take his seat.

Question from the third party.

1440

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. Over the past few months, we've been witnessing your cuts to post-secondary education to the tune of about \$400 million, and we're seeing programs cut and faculty layoffs at the post-secondary level. You've told us that tuition fees are going to rise by 15% at the college level and about 20% at the university level next year. While you're doing this, you've said, "Well, don't worry, there's going to be an income contingency plan in place," but we are fearful

that it will not be in place in time for the new tuition fees when they click in.

On April 17, your Premier said in this House, "We want to see the full income-contingent loan program, on which we now have agreement from the federal government, under way at the same time as there are any further increases" in tuition fees.

Minister, I ask you this question about that agreement with the federal government because last week, in an amazing display of dexterity and footwork, you said that you didn't have an agreement with the Metro Toronto school board, until someone waved a signed copy in front of you.

Is there an agreement, another secret agreement, with the federal government on the income-contingent loan program or not? If there is, will you table it here today? If there's not, what in the world was the Premier talking about?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): There is no secret about the fact that this government intends to work to an income-contingent loans package for students. We think that is what's needed. We said that publicly in 1992. We said it again before the election. I know this is a little strange, but we put that in a communiqué we sent to all the people of Ontario and said, "This is what we stand for and this is what we, as a party, believe in and this is what we're moving forward on." So there is no secret to that. We are working on that and we will continue to work on it. I hope one day to be able to bring that deal forward to this Legislature.

Mr Laughren: At least it's clear now that the Premier was blowing smoke when he said that we now have an agreement from the federal government. That is not correct. I assume that's what the Minister of Education is saying, that the Premier was dead wrong when he said he had an agreement with the federal government, and he said it in this House, as I recall.

He's shaking his head. How can you say no?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I said they agreed it was a good idea.

Mr Laughren: No, no. I'll read the quote again. Obviously the Premier didn't hear his own quote. He said, "We want to see the full income-contingent loan program, on which we now have agreement from the federal government...." That sounds like an agreement to me. If that's not an agreement, then I don't know what an agreement is. We must have another secret deal under way here that the Minister of Education—that the Premier hasn't told the Minister of Education about, or vice versa. I'm not sure what it is any more.

Carrying on with the similar theme of post-secondary education in the province, the minister has been promising since the beginning of the year that there would be a white paper to discuss the future of post-secondary education in this province. We know that you're having a lot of problems with this, and we understand that, and you've gone through a number of drafts, I believe. But now students are finishing their exams and soon will be out there looking for jobs; they won't be on the university campuses across the province.

You've been telling us now since January that the release of this post-secondary discussion paper will be soon. Would you tell us: When in the world is soon?

Hon Mr Snobelen: One of the things that's become very clear from our conversations with our federal counterparts in discussing income-contingent loans is that there might very well be a package of income-contingent loans available to students in this province. We might have been able to do that much quicker had the previous administration, the previous government, not opposed it, not frustrated the attempts at arriving at an agreement with the federal government, and that has become abundantly clear.

As it relates to the discussion paper, yes, as a government we believe it's important to have a public dialogue on some of the very important issues that are facing us in our post-secondary sector. This includes accessibility and of course a fair share of the cost of post-secondary education. We think that and other issues need to be discussed in a public way, in a full way, and we will be releasing a discussion paper on those subjects very soon.

JOB CREATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, you and the Premier have both stated several times that your government will create 725,000 jobs through your term and you will use a tax break to do it. According to your trickle-down economics theory, you say your tax break will create jobs because people will spend the money they get from the tax break, and that spending will create confidence and jobs will be created as well.

Now we find out from an Environics poll—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The members for Etobicoke West and Nepean, please come to order.

Mr Hampton: I know that this government doesn't want to hear from anyone who disagrees with it, but the fact is the Environics poll has tested people in the province and the majority of people have said they don't intend to spend any tax break. They're worried about their economic future and they're going to save the tax break. In fact, over 55% of Ontarians say they'll put any money from the tax break in the bank. So can the Minister of Finance tell us how his Conservative government will create 725,000 jobs over the next three years if the majority of people aren't going to spend the tax break and they're not going to stimulate the economy and they're not going to create new jobs?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): First of all, I don't rely upon Environics polls to tell me much of anything.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: We don't rely on polls.

Apparently the member wasn't here earlier in question period to listen to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt's question and my response. I know he finds this difficult to believe, but in jurisdictions where they've actually lowered the rate of taxation, they have created jobs and increased revenue.

Mr Hampton: It's interesting. Every time the Minister of Finance comes to the House, he tries to create a different spin. A month ago this spin was he cited an economist, Patti Croft of Canada Trust, and Miss Croft said—and she was very clear—the tax break would create new jobs only if it boosted consumer spending and that consumer spending resulted in new jobs.

We know, consumers are telling you, they're not going to spend the tax break; they're going to bank it. And the reason they're going to bank it is because your government has cut jobs, it's cut health care, it's cut education, it's cut communities and people are scared and they're worried.

I ask you again, if the majority of people in Ontario are telling you, "Look, we're not going to spend the money from the tax break; we're going to save it because we're worried and we're scared," how do you plan to create the 725,000 jobs?

Hon Mr Eves: I'm not relying upon an Environics poll or the Toronto Star to tell me how people are going to behave. As a matter of fact, if my memory serves me correctly, Environics was the same polling firm that predicted, 48 or 72 hours before June 8, that the Liberals were going to form a majority government. How well did they do?

To the honourable member, when your government was in power, you created tax increases equalling \$4 billion and you lost approximately \$2 billion in revenue. Obviously, increasing tax rates doesn't create employment. Your unemployment went up, your revenue went down and your tax rate went up.

1450

When are you going to understand there are people out there being taxed to death? They don't need 65 tax increases in 10 years. They don't need 11 personal income tax increases in 10 years. What they do need is some relief and some ability to keep their hard-earned tax dollars, and I have every confidence that they will spend it far better than any government ever dreamt of doing.

Mr Hampton: We know that the Minister of Finance has every confidence. We know that. What we want to know is, where's the evidence? We know the government didn't do any studies of its own. We know even the government's own economists told them this won't work. They government's own economists told them that since the majority of this tax cut is going to wealthy people, and wealthy people will bank it or they'll put it in a retirement savings plan, we know this isn't going to stimulate the economy.

I ask the Minister of Finance again, since he has no studies and since the people of Ontario are now telling him that they're not going to spend it, and they're not going to spend it because they're worried about all the job cuts and they're worried about the cuts to health care and they're worried about the cuts to education, since they're not going to spend it, they're not going to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Etobicoke West, come to order.

Hon Mr Eves: I know it is difficult for a member of the New Democratic Party to understand that somebody other than government can create jobs, but I can tell you,

Mr Speaker, that in other jurisdictions where they have reduced the rate of taxation, they have increased employment and they have increased—

Mr Hampton: Where, in the United States of America?

Hon Mr Eves: No. How about New Brunswick? Is that in the United States of America? How about Alberta? Is that in the United States of America? Before the honourable member wants to run for leader, I think we'd better give him a geography test to learn where New Brunswick and Alberta are.

PESTICIDES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Each year farmers in Ontario face many challenges that for the most part are beyond their control. In my riding of Perth, many a farmer can remember when prospects of a good harvest were jeopardized due to unpredictable storms, early or late frosts and flooding. In addition to these weather phenomena that are beyond the farmer's control, there are problems such as insect infestation, plant disease, which are of great concern but are more controllable.

Interjections.

Mr Bert Johnson: I'm glad to see that the people on the other side are awake; at least, I can hear them.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Mr Bert Johnson: As a relevant example, I know that potato farmers are concerned about the crop damage caused by the Colorado potato beetle. The potential financial toll resulting from destruction done by this serious pest is staggering. I wonder if the minister could tell us what is being done to give Ontario farmers the tools they need to combat this destructive beetle.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Yes, the food producers of Ontario are very much subject to elements of the weather and many other areas of concern.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I'm always amazed when the opposition has difficulty respecting food producers. I'll tell you, they are very important to this province.

Regarding the insect mentioned by my colleague from Perth, yes, the Colorado potato beetle has created a problem in both potato and tomato crops, and I am pleased that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture at the federal level, has licensed a new insecticide called Admire. They will be using this insecticide to control beetles in both potatoes and tomatoes, and will indeed, I believe, help the agriculture and food producers of Ontario to produce more economically for all the consumers in Ontario.

Mr Bert Johnson: As you're aware, Mr Minister, research and development are part of the government's commitment to assist the farmers of Ontario. I raised the example of the Colorado potato beetle in my original question because it's been known to develop resistance to virtually all insecticides. In the interest of the farmers of

Ontario, is there anything being done to make sure this doesn't happen with Admire?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We recognize the fact that certain insects do build up a resistance to insecticides. However, to combat the pesticide resistance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has developed a program with research partners and indeed with farmers so that through the use of herbicide and through the use of mechanical means they can and will control this pest and indeed make the production more efficient.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, you know that in the province of Ontario, over a quarter of a million people live in public housing, including many, many seniors. Both in the Common Sense Revolution and during the election and since the election, you and the Premier have made a number of statements that the government should get out of housing. You've also received a number of unsolicited offers from the private sector to buy some of these units.

I've met on a number of occasions with a number of concerned individuals in my community, as I'm sure other members in this House have with individuals in their communities, who are concerned about their future in public housing. These tenants in public housing are scared, they're anxious, and they're afraid of whether or not they'll have a roof over their head once the privatization takes place and whether or not they can at least expect a drastic rent increase if that were to happen.

In light of the comments that the Premier made over the weekend in which he said it may be very difficult for the province to sell the units and it may not happen after all, Mr Minister, and in light of the fact that there are a quarter of a million people who are really afraid, anxious and concerned out there, will you make a commitment today to stop making statements in the media and elsewhere regarding the inevitable sale of public housing and consult with the tenants and develop a plan with them that protects these vulnerable citizens who live there and ensures that they will not lose their homes or be at least exposed to drastic rent decreases?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Mr Gerretsen: What definite answer can you give to these people?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Most levels of government realize they shouldn't be in the bricks and mortar business. The Liberal government in Ottawa has also stated that it wants to get out of the social housing business. They've offered their portfolio to Ontario. Quite frankly, we don't want it, because we agree with them in this instance that government shouldn't be in the bricks and mortar business.

We are working with the federal government, we are working with the non-profit operators, and we're trying to work up a proposal that will allow us to get out of bricks and mortar and provide subsidies that would be of benefit to all people who need help in accommodation.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Leach: Not quite the Flying Toad, as the member has indicated. But we are working on a proposal, and I'm quite sure that we will have something coming forward in the not too distant future. It is a very complex issue involving all three levels of government, and we're working in concert with them.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): To the same minister: Let me be a little more specific, but I also share what my colleague from Kingston and The Islands has asked and I would address the area. You and I talked on the phone about seniors who have grave worries, have grave concerns and are feeling highly insecure. I suspect it's not just in Kingston and it's not just in Ottawa; as a matter of fact, it's probably even in your own riding. I've had four special meetings over the last six weeks with senior residents inviting me to please come, that they're going to lose their apartment or their home. It's a very big tragedy to see elderly people so worried about the community they live in.

I ask you, Minister, if you would confirm to our seniors, in terms of residences being sold out from under them or increases on their rent, that this will not happen, that their future is secure. Would you accept an invitation at the earliest possible convenience to come to the Ottawa-Carleton area, share your views and please assure seniors that you really do stand by making sure their future is secure?

Hon Mr Leach: I agree with the member. We must ensure that the seniors in our community are not frightened. If the members across the way would stop fearmongering over there, it would go a long way to alleviate that. They go around issuing statements that seniors are going to be thrown out of their homes, that their houses are going to be sold from underneath them, and that's utter nonsense.

We are looking at ways and means of getting out of the bricks and mortar business, we've said we want to ensure that we provide shelter subsidies to those people who need them and we are developing those programs. We have to do this in consultation with all three levels of government, so there will be no For Sale signs put on any building until such time as we're convinced we have the proper tools to do the job, and we will have soon.

1500

SCHOOL BOARD RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. On the weekend, the Premier had some very interesting comments published in the Ottawa Citizen as a result, I understand, of a meeting with the editorial board regarding educational funding. It's reported that he said, "If school boards pass on education costs through larger classroom sizes, they could be abolished." This seems like another rather bullying approach to dealing with school boards.

We know there have been 10,000 layoff notices issued by boards to teachers across the province. The \$1 billion taken out of education in one year will mean larger class sizes. I'm asking the minister today whether he agrees with his Premier that if a school board increases class size as a result of the changes that are being made in education this year, the school board will be abolished.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Clearly anyone who has studied this subject, who has looked at this system can tell you there is a tremendous amount of spending that can be reduced, a tremendous number of savings that can be found outside the classroom. Anyone who has looked at student-teacher ratios in Ontario versus actual class sizes realizes that if our people were more frequently deployed in a better way in the classroom, we could actually close that gap between class size and pupil-teacher ratio.

I can assure the honourable member opposite that I find no reason, and I'm sure no one in our government would find a reason, why class sizes should go up as a result of the reductions we've made. The Premier has said and I have said what I believe all my colleagues would agree on, that it is time for some fundamental changes to the way we fund education and to the governance of education in the province of Ontario. We, as a government, will take on those very thorny, very real issues, unlike your government and unlike the previous government.

Mr Wildman: I don't think the minister had the opportunity to answer the question. The Premier said, according to the newspaper report, despite everything the minister has said assuring us there will not be larger class sizes, that if a school board did increase class sizes, they could be abolished—the board, that is, not the classes. The board could be abolished. I'd like the minister to take the opportunity to assure the boards across the province that he agrees or disagrees with the Premier that if they increase class sizes, school boards could be abolished.

Hon Mr Snobelen: The member for Algoma is being clever, perhaps witty, with his suggestions from what's in the newspaper. He has obviously taken two things the Premier has said and that I just talked about a few moments ago in this House and put them together. I don't believe the Premier has said what the member opposite has represented.

What we have said very clearly is this: We do expect school boards to find the savings we have suggested, the less than 2% of their operating costs. We believe they can find those savings outside of the classroom. I think reasonable people across the province who've had some experience either in their own lives in the business community or at home understand that finding savings of that nature is not difficult in a system as large as we have. We fully expect that boards across the province will do that, that they will find those savings outside of the classroom.

Let me reassure the member for Algoma again that this government intends to take on those very real, very thorny issues the previous government left us, that is, a funding system that doesn't provide for equity in providing an equal opportunity for education for all students in Ontario. Surely that's required.

2001 CANADA SUMMER GAMES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. As you know, Ontario has been selected to host the 2001 Canada Summer Games. This is very exciting, positive

news which will focus the national spotlight on many of the fine qualities this province has to offer.

As you would expect, many communities, including my own, Kitchener, have expressed an interest in hosting these games. Unfortunately, the process is being delayed by the federal government, which has indicated that it wishes to reduce the amount of funding it provides for staging these games. Could you please advise us what actions you have taken to secure stable federal funding for this event?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): In December 1995 I actually advised the previous federal minister that our ability to host these games would be put in serious jeopardy should the federal government unilaterally change the funding formula for the games. I also indicated to the former minister, Minister Dupuy, that any site selection process would be delayed until a resolution of this matter was achieved.

It's my pleasure today to report that the new minister responsible, Minister Copps, has agreed with our position and has assured me that the federal government will abide by the terms of the funding formula for the 2001 Canada Summer Games.

Mr Wettlaufer: That is excellent news, but could you tell us what process will be used to select the host community for the 2001 summer games?

Hon Ms Mushinski: Now that there has been a resolution with respect to the funding question, my ministry will begin the process of contacting interested communities with regard to the host bidding process this spring.

The Canada Summer Games Council and my ministry will conduct a briefing for all interested parties at the end of May, called the bidders' conference. I'm informed that 14 communities in Ontario have expressed an interest in hosting these games. The bids must be submitted by the fall, and the ministry will then select up to three potential host sites. The Canada Summer Games Council then chooses the host community.

1510

PETITIONS

INQUESTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I am proud to present the following petition signed by several people, one being Councillor John Fera, the mover of a regional council motion that states:

"Whereas the Minister of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services will remove the requirement in the Coroners Act for mandatory inquests for construction and mining deaths; and

"Whereas the practice of mandatory inquests represents the lifeblood for the labour movement and for the mining and construction industries in the pursuit of a healthy and safe workplace; and

"Whereas the inquests held as a result of the tragic deaths have provided significant opportunities to identify why such terrible tragedies happen and provide recommendations on how to avoid these deaths in the future; and

"Whereas 90% of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act is comprised of recommendations from the coroners' inquests; and

"Whereas such action by the ministry has the potential to increase the number of workers' compensation claims and an increased loss of life; and

"Whereas the inquest recommendations are sent Canada-wide to improve safety opportunities everywhere in the country; and

"Whereas the inquest recommendations provide the victims' families with an opportunity to understand the circumstances surrounding the death of a loved one; and

"Whereas it is irrational to attempt to cost out a person's life as a budget-saving measure,

"Therefore, be it resolved that the regional council petition the Premier of Ontario, the Treasurer of Ontario and the Minister of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services to immediately reinstate the requirement for mandatory inquests for construction and mining deaths in Ontario and that we solicit the support of our members of provincial Parliament and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities in our struggle; and

"To the Honourable Solicitor General and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industry; and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sets workplace safety back 20 years,

"We, the undersigned, request the Solicitor General, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industry, to reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

I sign it and I thank you, Mr Speaker.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here yet another petition from the good people of Ontario with regard to their opposition to rent control. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 and the Common Sense Revolution document;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants in this province;

"We, the undersigned, therefore call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop this attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province and to preserve the present system of rent control."

I affix my signature.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, the trustees and employees of the Perth County Board of Education, have actively contributed to cost control for the Perth County Board of Education to the extent that our education costs are the second-lowest of public boards in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas to continue with your proposed grant reductions will severely limit our ability to provide an equal opportunity for our students to compete with students in other boards for employment and for positions in college or university; and

"Whereas the cost-effectiveness of the Perth County Board of Education is demonstrated in that our cost per pupil (\$4,984) is about \$2,000 below the provincial average and only \$68 more than the lowest provincial average cost per pupil in Canada, namely, Prince Edward Island at \$4,916;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reinstate our general legislative grants to the 1995 levels; and

"To provide further grants to raise the level of service to students in Perth county to that which the government desires."

I will affix my signature to this so the assembly can receive it.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, reject the Harris government's historic proposals to attack the injured workers of Ontario. We, the people of Ontario, did not intend to vote against our neighbours. We want to build a better community. Injured workers are part of that community.

"We say no to the Harris plan to cut injured workers' benefits, cut injured workers' pensions and future economic loss payments, introduce a waiting period for benefits after injury, refuse compensation for disabilities like repetitive strains and occupational diseases, shift the responsibility from the WCB and employer to the Ontario taxpayer, and privatize the WCB at the expense of the injured worker and the public.

"We call on the Harris government to solve the WCB's problems without attacking injured workers."

I'm proud to affix my signature to this petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition today from the people of Marathon, Ontario. I received it in the mail on Friday, and it is signed by 92 residents of Marathon in the riding of Lake Nipigon. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Lake Nipigon riding, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed quickly with legislation to reduce our provincial tax rates as promised during the last provincial election, and we

call on all members of the Parliament of Ontario to support the government in its promise to reduce provincial income tax rates in Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas during the election campaign Premier Harris promised to protect the rights of the disabled and seniors; and

"Whereas now Premier Harris is saying that the disabled must become a part of workfare and yet they will be paid less than an able-bodied employee;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the needs of the disabled, to help the disabled to find suitable employment and to pay the disabled a fair wage."

This has been signed by over 100 petitioners and I have affixed my signature.

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition here from the city of St Thomas and around St Thomas. It says:

"Save Our Psych.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That a recommendation by the psychiatric hospitals restructuring committee to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital be rejected.

"We believe the restructuring committee has not fully considered the case for retaining St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

"We believe the hospital and the community of St Thomas provide care and caring for psych patients which is equal to and better than London.

"We believe closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital will have a devastating impact on the economy and residents of St Thomas and Elgin county.

"We believe London can better absorb the impact of closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital.

"Finally, we believe it would be cheaper for the government to retain the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in terms of capital improvements required to both facilities.

"Therefore, we request that the government refrain from endorsing and implementing the recommendation to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital."

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Minister of Health, and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I affix my signature also.

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I wish to present to the Legislature a petition with respect to the possible privatization of Ontario Hydro.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition from the residents of eastern Ontario who are opposed to the government's decision forcing the social assistance recipients who attend post-secondary or retraining programs off family benefits on to general welfare assistance and on to the OSAP system. These individuals write:

"OSAP does not cover the four months of non-school. OSAP is insufficient to live on. It must be paid back, and therefore the individual debt would be great and no one is going to tackle the immense task of attending school, maintaining a house and raising a family.

"Those attending school are bettering themselves to enter the workplace. Therefore, individuals will eventually be off the system. Limit them to attending school and you have these individuals on assistance for life because there are insufficient jobs available for the skills they possess."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

1520

RENT REGULATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): A petition to the Ontario Legislature, to Premier Mike Harris, Minister Al Leach and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative government made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document; and

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system; and

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants of Ontario; and

"Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished; and

"Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I affix my signature also.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition from the secondary teachers of Ontario to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

LIBRARY GRANTS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here which is addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas there is a possibility that the provincial government may cancel all provincial funding to public libraries and eliminate its role in ensuring that public libraries are regulated provincially; and

"Whereas Ontario's public libraries are a rich resource for the educational and information needs of all of our citizens, regardless of income or age, and public libraries are the most widely used institution in any community (more than schools, parks and recreational facilities); and

"Whereas public libraries are needed more than ever to provide economic strength and quality of life at a time when technology is changing rapidly and job retraining and upgrading are in constant demand, and adequate provincial funding will ensure our excellent public libraries will continue to meet the needs and interests of all Ontarians no matter where they reside; and

"Whereas the provincial government should not decrease its interest in a well-informed and literate population;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To maintain its dual role in sustaining the province-wide information infrastructure already linking public libraries and in ensuring that the people of Ontario will receive a basic level of library service by protecting provincial per-household grants to public libraries."

This is signed by over 600 people and I've affixed my signature.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Premier Harris, Minister Cam Jackson and Minister Elizabeth Witmer.

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits, excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational disease, eliminating pension supplements, handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury, integrating sick benefits into WCB, eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal (WCAT) including eliminating worker representation on the board and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeals structure with worker representation and that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I affix my signature also.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure today to rise to present a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Durham East, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed as quickly as possible with the legislation to reduce provincial tax rates as promised during the last provincial election. We call on all members of the Parliament of Ontario to support this government in its promise to reduce provincial income taxes and remember that tax cuts equal jobs."

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION REPEAL ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR L'INSTITUT D'ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Snobelen moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 45, An Act to repeal the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Act and transfer assets to the University of Toronto / Projet de loi 45, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur l'Institut d'études pédagogiques de l'Ontario et transférant l'actif de l'Institut à l'Université de Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): This legislation will integrate the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, or OISE, and the faculty of education at the University of Toronto. It will repeal the OISE act of 1965 and transfer OISE to the University of Toronto effective July 1, 1996.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HIGHWAY TRANSPORT BOARD AND PUBLIC VEHICLES AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DES TRANSPORTS ROUTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET LA LOI SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 39, An Act to amend the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act and the Public Vehicles Act and to make consequential changes to certain other Acts / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission des transports routiers de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les véhicules de transport en commun et apportant des modifications corrélatives à certaines autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Hamilton Centre had the floor. Is this correct?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Mr Speaker, to be helpful, I believe we were in rotation for questions and comments.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): He hadn't finished.

Mr Michael Brown: I thought Mr Stockwell had spoken.

The Acting Speaker: The table keeps a very good record, and I believe the last one to speak was the member for Hamilton Centre. You have six minutes and 13 seconds.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Just to be clear, it was my understanding that we had completed the time and we were into the rotation, as my colleague has mentioned earlier, in terms of the two-minute responses.

The Acting Speaker: If you have finished your debate, we'll proceed to questions and comments, if this is what you wish.

Mr Christopherson: I had concluded my comments and was prepared to enter into the two-minute responses.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Michael Brown: I want to say, first of all, that we very much appreciated the succinct and direct comments from the member for Hamilton Centre regarding this particularly important piece of legislation that's before us today. Just so people are reminded, this is a bill that deregulates bus transportation within the province.

We particularly appreciate a member from Hamilton discussing this, because the issue for many of us in rural and northern Ontario is exactly something that doesn't particularly deal with the urban centres in Ontario but deals with these rural centres. What I think we have come to understand over the period of this, so far, brief debate is that there will be a loss of bus service to the smaller communities across Ontario. There is no question in anyone's mind that the smaller communities will not have bus service.

What does that mean? What that means exactly is that the seniors who rely on that bus transportation to get to

medical appointments or perhaps visit relatives will no longer be able to take advantage of that service. The students, those young people who use bus transportation to go to college or university, will no longer be able, from those small communities, to access that service.

So when I hear a member from an urban centre like Hamilton, some of whose constituents may benefit from slightly reduced fares—I'm not sure, but it's conceivable that could happen—I want to tell you that we all appreciate that member bringing these issues in front of the Legislature and speaking so directly to this bill of great public concern in rural and northern Ontario.

1530

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? If not, the member for Hamilton Centre, you have two minutes.

Mr Christopherson: I very much appreciate the comments of the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, who has participated in a very positive way and was here all throughout the debate last week, and I very much appreciate his recognition that while this may not be a critical, burning issue for the majority of my constituents in Hamilton Centre, it is indeed an issue that deserves to be recognized by all Ontarians, because as I said in my speech last week, it's just another piece of the quality of life of Ontario that is falling by the wayside as this government institutes their radical, draconian agenda wherein the vast majority of working people and their families are the losers.

We saw today the issue of workers' compensation as it relates to the day of mourning, and we know that occupational health and safety is on the line, just as we know that transportation networks are on the line. If this government can find a way where some of their friends can benefit from deregulating or backing government away, then of course that becomes the flavour of the day. It was mentioned that this bill is not the deregulation bill, but we do recognize this is very much the tee-up. As my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin has mentioned, there are a lot of seniors, there are a lot of students, there are unemployed workers, there are people who choose because of the opportunity of choice in Ontario to live in more remote rural areas who will lose as a result. Quite frankly, there's nothing but a litany of lose, lose, lose for the vast majority of Ontarians when we see this Tory agenda.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I'm pleased to take part this afternoon in the discussion over Bill 39, which will amend the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act and the Public Vehicles Act, but before I begin, if I might, I'd just like to take the opportunity, since technically I guess this is my maiden speech—we tried to get it off the ground a couple of times last fall, but Mother Time intervened.

I'd like to thank the citizens of my constituency high atop Hamilton Mountain for placing their faith and trust in me last June 8. It has been my goal during the last 10 months, and will continue to be my goal during the next four years, to represent the citizens of Hamilton Mountain to the best of my ability and to work diligently and

consciously towards earning the trust that they have placed in me.

I'd also like to pay due respect to the two previous members for Hamilton Mountain, the Honourable John Smith and the Honourable Brian Charlton, both of whom served in various portfolios under two previous governments, Mr Smith with the Progressive Conservatives and Mr Charlton with the previous New Democratic Party government. I'm pleased to report that both are doing well in their current endeavours and that Mr Charlton in particular has recovered 100% from his heart attack which he suffered just prior to the election.

Back to the business at hand. What is the rationale behind this bill? I believe that Bill 39, as the Minister of Transportation has clearly indicated, is consistent with this government's promise during the last election campaign to eliminate red tape and to reduce the regulatory burden on business in this province. By reducing regulations that affect business, this government is making all regulation of business by government faster, less intrusive and less costly to both sides, and we must decrease the regulatory burden in this province in order to stimulate job creation, economic growth and investment. That was this government's promise during the last election, and we are following through on that promise.

The immediate purpose of Bill 39 is to introduce an interim regulatory system which will govern market entry and control for intercity bus services until December 31, 1997. On January 1, 1998, full economic deregulation of this industry will take place. The intercity bus industry is the only remaining form of transportation in which market entry is regulated. It is time that we allowed this industry to be competitive so that it can provide a higher-quality service and a higher number of service options to the travelling public. As was noted in the House last week, the 1992 Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation recommended that the regulations on the bus industry be decreased.

What specifically does this bill change? In regard to the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act, this bill makes some important amendments which will transform the board into a more efficient and effective body. For example, this bill will require that the board be a smaller body. Members will sit on the board on a part-time basis, as required. It will also allow for hearings to take place in the presence of one member, unlike the previous requirement that there be at least two members for a hearing to proceed. Again, this will facilitate increased efficiency, as will the board's freedom to hire staff on the basis of its level of activity. The Ontario Highway Transport Board Act will continue to require that members not hold other duties that are inconsistent with their duties as members of the board.

This bill will also achieve administrative efficiency by having the board, instead of the ministry, carry out the licensing and sanctioning of intercity bus operators. It will be the board's responsibility to issue operating licences, grant renewal of licences, issue special authorities, transfer licences and interpret ambiguous licences. The board will therefore have the power to control operators who are not complying, including amending, sus-

pending or cancelling operating licences according to the rules governed by the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

The interim period that will be created by this bill is necessary because it will allow existing operators to prepare their companies for increased competition. It will also set in place a formal process to encourage existing operators which are planning to downsize to transfer low-volume scheduled services to locally based service providers who may be better able to satisfy the travel needs of Ontario's small, rural and remote communities.

The opposition has charged that this bill will wipe out bus service in rural Ontario. I don't believe this will be the case. Let's take a look at an important statistic under the current regulatory scheme. The federal government estimates that over 400 communities have lost service since 1980. That's 400 communities with no intercity bus service. To quote from a column in the *London Free Press* last November: "The regulatory system for intercity motor coach transportation in Ontario is entirely without merit. Most of the rural bus routes the scheme was supposed to have sustained have dropped, yet customers are stuck with inflated fares on the dwindling number of intercity routes that still have regular bus service."

Bill 39 will change this situation by encouraging a new environment for maintaining and possibly improving services to small-town Ontario. For example, the rules governing discontinuance and reduction of scheduled services will be changed. Bill 39 will require scheduled carriers to provide a 30-day notice period prior to significant service reduction, and it will require scheduled carriers to provide a 90-day notice period prior to route abandonment. Under the current legislation, only a 10-day notice period is required for service reduction or route abandonment. These changes are intended to encourage entrepreneurs and local communities to find alternative transportation during this lengthened notice period.

The president of Grey Bruce Airbus service has said: "I for one do not assume for a moment that small-town Ontario is going to be abandoned as a result of deregulation. We see it as an opportunity rather than being detrimental."

One other very important element of Bill 39 which must be mentioned is the addition of new regulation-making powers to allow for the imposition of fees to be paid by persons who use the board. These fees will not only be payable by applicants, but also by opponents and by persons requesting hearings; in short, the direct users of the board's services. This new regulatory system will thus rely strictly on a user-pay concept. It will not rely on the taxes of the hardworking people of this province.

1540

It should also be noted that Bill 39 will not affect the safety measures of the intercity bus industry. Safety regulation and enforcement will continue to be the responsibility of the Ministry of Transportation.

We need to continue to ensure the safety performance of operators during the interim period and after economic deregulation is implemented, and we are very serious about doing so, as the minister pointed out last week in the House.

For example, this bill will increase the insurance requirements for bus operators, thereby making certain that

only those operators who are serious about providing a safe and high-quality service will want to do business. Moreover, this government is pushing for a national review of bus safety to see if national bus safety measures should be implemented.

In conclusion, I believe that Bill 39, with its partial deregulation of the intercity bus industry, will benefit Ontarians because it will help to create a smaller provincial government that is more effective and less intrusive; that has fewer regulations, with lower compliance costs for the taxpayer; that provides more effective and efficient protection for consumers; that extends more regulation of business by business and protects consumers and workers without choking innovation or wasting the hard-earned money of Ontario taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Michael Brown: I want to applaud the member on his maiden speech to this House, but I do have some questions about what he has outlined to us today.

One interesting thing I think he said was pretty much that deregulation will be a panacea for Ontario. Some of us have been through the truck deregulation of the late 1980s and early 1990s. One concern I had at that time, and continue to have, in regard to bus deregulation was the unfair competitive advantage that often goes to provinces adjoining us, in other words, Quebec and Manitoba.

Those two provinces are continuing with a form of regulation, which means that Ontario carriers will therefore have more difficulty in getting into their markets. They, however, do not face that same difficulty in entering the Ontario market. What occurs, and we've seen that with trucks along the Quebec border and along the Manitoba border, is that Quebec and Manitoba companies can come into Ontario and take the cream, their operating expenses often being offset by what is going on in their home provinces and causing a great disadvantage to Ontario carriers in Ontario.

I've always been a proponent of knocking down trade barriers between provinces but I think we have to be realistic here. We have to understand that the other provinces have to treat us the same way we treat them, and one thing this bill does not deal with is this very difficult issue of competitiveness between provinces and unfair advantage that goes to carriers from the other provinces.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I too would like to congratulate the member on making his maiden speech, but he said something right at the very beginning that I find not only confusing but somewhat out of whack: this whole notion that somehow deregulation is the same thing as cutting red tape. I think most of us in the House would agree that unnecessary red tape of whatever measure it may take, at whatever government level—outdated regulations, outdated ways of doing things, something that prevents the proper development of things that take place—should be scrapped.

To somehow equate that to the idea that deregulation is merely the cutting out of red tape I think is in error. I don't think that's the actual fact.

The main fear that people have about deregulation in the bus industry is something that has already been

mentioned in this House a number of times, and that relates to the fact that an awful lot of smaller communities will simply no longer be served. That's a fact. We've got a whole list of communities that may not be served. It goes on through about 100 names of small communities that are presently being served that will no longer be served if this law that's being proposed is put into effect. To somehow equate the loss of service to communities that, it may very well be, are not economic runs for bus companies right now with the notion, "Well, that's all right because we're cutting out red tape," is incorrect and improper.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? If not, the member for Hamilton Mountain. He's not there. Further debate?

Mr Michael Brown: I have not had an opportunity to say very much about this bill, and it is a bill that will affect northern communities and rural communities far more than the government over there wants to admit.

The first thing we should say is that this bill is an interim measure. It will be in place for some 21 months and includes a downsizing of the board, but is clearly the interim step in moving to full deregulation of intercity bus services across Ontario. First of all, we should understand that this is an interim measure based directly on the idea that we will fully deregulate in Ontario.

In speaking to the member for Hamilton Mountain's speech, I pointed out what one of my great fears is. One of my great fears is the same as what happened when trucking was deregulated, and that is, we work out reasonable arrangements with our sister provinces so they cannot skim the bus routes in Ontario while our companies have no ability, or very little ability, to move into their jurisdictions. It is just not fair for Ontario companies not to be able to legitimately operate under the same rules in Quebec or in Manitoba as their companies can in Ontario. As the government moves through this, I think they should understand that there are a lot of problems.

I know, Mr Speaker, you're particularly interested in the labour situation on the Quebec border, where construction workers from Quebec may work in Ontario. They cross the border anywhere from Ottawa along through to—I would suggest they probably even go to North Bay or places up along the northern edge of our province. They come in—and that's fair enough; I think that's great—but our workers do not have the same ability to move into the province of Quebec.

Governments have been wrestling with this issue for as long as I can remember, and that's eight or nine years in this place, and probably for eons before, but what I'm trying to point out to governments is that it's not as easy to solve these particular situations as one often may think. It seems to me that if we're trying to build a competitive province, a province that creates jobs, a province where our companies play on a level playing field with other companies, this issue of borders and of what can happen in Quebec and Manitoba is critically important.

I know this because I happen to have the head office of one of the major trucking firms in this province located in my constituency. They have come to me and said: "We've had difficulty getting licences to operate in

Manitoba, and yet I see their companies encroaching on routes that we wish to pursue and make money on. We can't compete in these particular areas."

1550

I know that to be a real problem, and if the government does not move to correct the injustices with our neighbouring provinces and provide Ontario companies with the same rules and standards as the other provinces, I really don't know why anybody would even consider moving in this deregulation manner. It seems to me that in Canada we need a level playing field or we cannot go forward.

I also want to talk a little about the safety issues. Again this relates almost directly to the recent truck deregulation in the province, or at least the deregulation that's occurred in the last five or six years.

It is all well and good for ministers to say, "The market will determine everything and the market will make sure communities are served and that freight goes here or freight goes there." But the reality is that in a deregulated market some of the less scrupulous operators, as they sharpen their pencils and try to find less expensive ways of doing things, one of the things they sometimes do is not to pay quite as much attention to the amount of maintenance their vehicles get. It's maybe a harsh statement, but it's true.

We have seen in Ontario great public concern about truck safety. I'm afraid, or at least I'm concerned, that if buses also are totally deregulated and safety is only inspected by the Ministry of Transportation, and bottom lines are being shaved, one of the things that may very well happen in the busing industry is the same thing that has happened in the trucking industry, that we see increasing safety difficulties.

I'm sure the Minister of Transportation would say to me, "We have all these inspectors and we're going to put the OPP special units out there" and do all those wonderful things. But at a time when we see great downsizing of the Ministry of Transportation, great downsizing within the OPP, within municipal forces that enforce highway safety, it's not likely to happen. What will happen is that we will no doubt have greater difficulty in assuring the public of safe vehicles out there providing that very same intercity transportation we want to have.

Deregulation may cause—and I'm just cautioning the government on this—the same kind of safety concerns in the busing industry that we have seen in trucking, and that is just because of straight economics. When you start to sharpen your pencil, some things have to go, and checking those brakes and those wheel bearings and all those other things you must check sometimes falls by the boards.

My greatest concern about this bill is that I believe there will be perhaps hundreds of Ontario communities that will no longer have service. There will be smaller centres and maybe even some medium-sized centres that will lose their service. That is the experience of the United Kingdom, that is the experience of the United States. In those situations, it wasn't just the little towns or villages of 200 or 300 people, it was some quite sizeable places. Towns of 4,000, 5,000, 6,000 people no longer had bus service.

When you start to think about transportation in the broader sense—and I think we need to speak about transportation in the broader sense—you realize our systems are now breaking down. It's a question not of a particular route but of a system, and now rural communities are going to be left out of some of those systems.

In this province 50 or 60 years ago passenger rail transportation was an important component of what we did, even in rural Ontario; 50 or 60 years ago you could go many places by rail that you wouldn't even think of today. Today we have good rail service just through the Windsor-Quebec City corridor. Outside of that, there is really not substantial rail service that anybody would call good in this province. So people who did not own their own vehicles could only rely on bus service.

With bus service gone for many of the smaller communities—and I assure you it will happen. It's not a guess; it's not a surmise; it will happen. Many of the smaller communities across this province will not have service, or will not have service that's appropriate to the community. As a northern member, you're particularly interested in this when you think about what's happened in terms of air service in northern Ontario. There, with the great distances, sometimes air service was like bus service to northerners.

We've seen a government come in, tell the crown corporation, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, that it should no longer provide air service across northern Ontario. They should leave it to the private sector. What have we seen? We've seen most of those communities maintain some service. But I would suggest to you, that will not last for very long. We will have a large number of the smaller northern communities without a private carrier because it will turn out to be not economically viable.

So what is the Minister of Northern Development going to do?

Mr Gerretsen: Nothing.

Mr Michael Brown: No, he hasn't done nothing, exactly, but pretty close to nothing. He's gone to Hornepayne and to Chapleau and to Gore Bay and said: "We'll provide you service. There'll be no subsidy, however. But we will fly the Ministry of Natural Resources plane in there once daily each way to do that." Now, that's not a subsidy. They're being served by Ministry of Natural Resources aircraft with Ministry of Natural Resources pilots to come in and take people on one of the strangest air routes that anyone in northern Ontario could ever imagine. That's how the minister has so far avoided the subsidy question.

But the real question if you look at these northern air routes—and as I say, my friends certainly on this side understand that—is that the system has broken down. While it could be there's air service to some communities, in any kind of a systematic way it no longer exists. If it doesn't exist, it means that people will have great difficulty in accessing that service and pretty soon the service won't exist because somebody will make the argument that the market no longer exists.

So we take that example of the government's lack of policy for northern air transportation and bring it down to talk about rural bus service and we see exactly the same

thing happening. There will not be service to many communities in a way that the community is used to having. That will affect senior citizens who might wish to go to medical appointments, it will affect senior citizens who might want to go visit their children or their sisters and brothers, it'll affect students who may wish to go from Leamington to the University of Western Ontario to take their courses, or to Fanshawe College. It will affect students all across the province, who are one of the great users of bus service.

I look at these two groups and I say they probably don't fit the profile of the Conservative voter. "Those voters out there aren't going to vote for us anyway, so who cares? You guys are toast." You don't care. A Conservative voter probably doesn't use the bus very much. So there you go, too bad, so sad, that one's gone. For what? What's the savings here? The savings to government is virtually nothing. I think the entire bill for the Ontario transportation board was somewhere around \$500,000.

I'm not opposed to the suggestion in this bill, by the way, that says the people who use that system should pay for it. The bill for the government is actually zero under this bill. That makes sense. Let the users pay for it. I think that does make sense, it makes good sense. But on the other hand, to totally abandon it after 21 months and say, "Well, the market's going to look after this," is Never-Never Land. It's the survival of the fittest; it's the Darwinian approach to politics. It's the Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan approach. It's the approach that says: "If the market isn't there, we're not going to serve it. We have no public imperative, no public policy that says smaller communities, the rural part of our province and the northern part of our province deserve service. Hey, it doesn't pay the bills. If it doesn't pay the bills, we won't provide service."

1600

I look around and I can see that maybe a member like my friend Mr Duncan from Windsor might say, "Well, I'm from Windsor and it probably doesn't matter to me very much," but it does matter to him, because he realizes that people from outside his community need those services to come from the smaller community in to the hospital or in to the university or in to the college or in to visit their relatives. It's very necessary, and it's very necessary for his constituents to be able to go out to these smaller places in the province by means of public transportation and to access those. So even urban members seem to understand, or should understand, that it is necessary for government to take a public policy role here and to say, yes, the small communities deserve to have service, and we will ensure that. That's what the Ontario Highway Transportation Board did: It assured them of service. And you are going to replace it with nothing but Adam Smith's invisible hand. The invisible hand's going to do it.

Well, the invisible hand isn't going to do it, and they might as well be straight up with the people of Ontario and just say to them, "Those small places in Ontario that have bus service today just won't have it, and that's Conservative government policy." Why don't you just be straight up and honest and say: "Forget it. We don't care

whether you have bus service. It's not part of our public policy"?

On Thursday I was in here and I was thinking about how, if you took this same example and, absurd as it might sound, extrapolated that to the municipalities and said, "Well, for municipal transit, let's do the same thing; let's permit any company that wants to get in here to run a bus up and down Bay Street," it would be chaos. You know it would be chaos, and there would be routes even within the municipality of Toronto that would not have bus service. All we're asking as rural members is that the same kind of consideration that we give to public transportation within metropolitan areas be also provided to us. It costs government nothing.

There are some costs, and I understand those. The costs are to go to the board, to go and demonstrate that there's a public necessity that this service be provided. That's a real challenge sometimes for people to make, and sometimes there are frivolous objections made just to delay people. But I think your own bill solves that. Your own bill says, "Well, gee, if you're going to go make an objection, you're going to have to pay for your share of the board's costs." You won't have that kind of frivolous objection that is made just to discourage other people from coming before the board.

So as I stand here today, I just ask the government members, and that's really who we're asking: Are you committed to public transportation in this province? Are you committed to permitting people to access the services that our urban cousins would take for granted? Are you committed, for a very minimal cost, actually no cost, to make sure the people of this province who don't happen to live in a major metropolitan area can access the amenities that everyone else accesses?

If the answer is, "Yes, we as Conservatives believe these small villages and hamlets should be serviced," then of course you have to scrap this particular bill. It has to be scrapped. You have to go back to the drawing board. You have to go back and say, "How will we ensure that the smaller communities, the seniors who live in the smaller places in this province, do have service, and will it be part of the system?" If the answer is yes, you cannot possibly support this bill.

On the other hand, if it's just the old Adam Smith invisible hand routine, "We don't care about you small guys; if you can't pay your own way, you're out of here"—and, more and more, we're beginning to believe that's what this government is about, just totally—

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Make sure you've got money.

Mr Michael Brown: My friend says, "Make sure you've got money," and that's what they're saying: "If you can pay your way, you can do it. If you can't, forget it; you're out of here." I don't think that's the kind of Ontario I wish to live in.

The fourth thing I want to talk about today is the environmental challenge, the environmental problems that will come about by putting more cars, private vehicles, on our highways, because that's the answer. If there are no trains and if there are no buses and you wish to go somewhere, it will be in a private vehicle. I want the government to consider the effect of the extra gasoline,

the air emissions you're going to have, the extra difficulties you're going to have with your roads, and I want them to consider whether this makes any sense as environmental policy. I myself don't believe you have a hope of demonstrating that by taking buses out of these communities and off of these routes you will be able to provide a positive environmental impact in Ontario.

For all these reasons, I find this bill unsupportable. I remind the government again that there must be some responsibility for those of us who aren't rich and for those of us who can't pay the freight all the time, that we have some responsibility to make sure that northern and rural areas of this province are provided with adequate transportation services. I would expect that on a vote the Conservative members in this Legislature would support both opposition parties in asking that this particular bill be turned down so that we can address this issue in a far more sensible manner.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I want to make a few comments about bus deregulation as it applies to the rural communities, as the member has just mentioned, but I also want to say that I see a real problem in rural areas coming from the way this government is treating those lands that we see further out from Toronto.

Recently, you would know, the agricultural colleges across Ontario have lost their autonomy to a larger university in Guelph. Some auto licensing businesses in small towns have been removed. We have car dealerships in these smaller areas that would avail themselves of getting their licences etc. We've had two in my riding and one in Essex South that have been affected this way.

As well, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is talking about closing down some of the ag offices across Ontario. These are all things that weigh heavily in the rural community on the fibre of keeping everyone together with some sense of direction and some sense of community. As well, we still have in a great many areas of Ontario underserved areas as it pertains to doctors.

Once you take all this into account and then see that the government has decided it wants to deregulate the busing industry and there is no guarantee of service for these smaller communities, it's just another example of government governing only by what they can see from the CN Tower. It was mentioned of past Tory governments and I think it applies again here today.

1610

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): First of all, in the Ministry of Transportation, as a matter of fact, yes we are committed to transportation in this province. Safety has always been a factor and always will continue to be a factor in the province. We've had a number of bus blitzes where as opposed to taking trucks off, we take buses off the schedule to view the safety standards, and we will continue to maintain standards of safety with regard to the busing industry. That is one area that the MTO will not deviate from in any way, shape or form.

It has to be mentioned also that a community can be provided service under the charter the way it stands now. However, that service could be as limited as once a month and that stops other busing companies from

coming into that location. What we're trying to do is give the opportunity for individuals, entrepreneurs and innovators who come up with new ideas to look at possibly bringing in smaller services to service those small communities that could be on a regular basis, so we could have regular schedules in localities as opposed to once a month or once a week or however it comes about.

Safety, as I said, is and always will be one of the ways we can regulate and maintain the standards in the busing industry to ensure the safety of the citizens of the province of Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I want to thank my colleague for his discussion today and suggest to the government that the argument he put around regulation and deregulation is sound. It is sound because historically and successfully in the history of this province, indeed of this country, successive governments of different stripes have recognized that one can use regulation to leverage service from the private sector to save the public sector cost. To ignore that reality and give away the house, as the government would suggest we do in this bill, does not serve taxpayers and does not serve those communities that will lose service.

It's a simple economic equation, very simple: You use the profitable lines to leverage service to the unprofitable areas—and it works. It works for consumers in small towns, it works for those businesses and industries that rely on bus service to bring in consumers to larger centres, it works from the standpoint of safety for those on the buses and those on the roads.

It is well put and well argued in the economic literature and in the experience and history of this province and country that indeed governments can leverage better service for smaller communities by using those profitable lines to subsidize the less profitable.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I listened very carefully to the comments made by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin on the piece of legislation that's brought forward. There's no doubt about it: The towns in northern Ontario and in rural southern Ontario are going to suffer as a result of what the Conservative government is doing. Ronald Reagan did what Mike Harris is doing in Ontario, and as a result a lot of the small towns in the United States lost regular bus service. Sure, the small bus operators started up, but the big operators came in and operated at a loss so they could run the small operators out of business. As a result, in the small towns students who need the transportation to get back and forth to school and to visit their families and the seniors who are unable to drive a car are stranded at home; the other people who cannot afford a car are left at home. A lot of the points that have been brought up, we're going to see the effect of it throughout northern Ontario.

I just wanted to compliment the member on the debate that he's brought forward here, that this bill should be killed because it's taking everything out of the small towns. The stores where the bus stops and people go in and get a little bit of service when they get off the bus are going to lose out, the small garages in northern Ontario and small-town rural Ontario that depend on the bus to deliver the parts in a timely fashion to repair the cars or to repair the machines in the industry—every-

body's going to suffer as a result of Mike Harris trying to copycat what Ronald Reagan was doing in the States, and small-town northern Ontario and rural Ontario are going to take a real slap on the face from the Tory government on this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Michael Brown: I appreciate the comments of the members. I appreciate the comments from the parliamentary assistant to the minister. I think he's trying to frame us as Luddites, like we don't want to change anything, we don't want innovation, we don't want the private sector to be able to move into routes and to do things that make good entrepreneurial sense. Yes, we do. We want that to happen.

We want some change to the highway transportation board. We want to make the terms different. We want re-regulation; we don't want deregulation. We believe there are things that can change. After all, this is not an invention of a Liberal government or an NDP government. This is the Tories. This board was in full glory during the Frost years, the Robarts years, the Davis years. They controlled everything that happened in this province. It's their regulation, it's them, and maybe it was appropriate then. I'm not saying it wasn't appropriate then. It was the regulation that worked for the province at the time. It provided service to the rural communities. It provided good service across this province. And yes, the 1990s are different than the 1950s; the 1990s are different than the 1960s. But to say, "Let's just throw the whole thing out, forget about it. Let the market decide. Attack the people in the small towns; take their service away from them. The government has no role at all in providing service," is beyond comprehension.

I'm asking those Conservative members from ridings that are going to lose service to stand up and speak for your constituents. Ask your government to re-regulate. Forget about this deregulation nonsense. Government does have a role. My constituents deserve to have public transportation, yours do too, and government has a right and an obligation to see that it happens.

1620

M. Pouliot : J'apprécie l'opportunité de participer au débat concernant le projet de loi 39, une mesure intérieure, comme vous le savez si bien.

I welcome the opportunity to take part in this interim measure which is Bill 39. I don't take a great deal of pleasure in debating it, for I believe this de facto situation would be better left unchanged.

While I was the recipient of an excellent briefing from both the minister's staff and—the courtesy was further extended—the good people of the Ministry of Transportation, who certainly went beyond the call of duty to explain what the minister was trying to sell, and I wish, with candour, to convey to the minister that it was very much appreciated by members of our caucus staff and certainly by myself as the critic, what we have here is not deregulation.

The government has said we need to prepare, do some groundwork, notify the marketplace, the entrepreneurs, the actual players and the would-be entrants that starting in 1998 the system will change from one that we've

gotten to appreciate, for it served the province of Ontario very well. It's been in place since 1920; it's not a matter of months or years. It goes beyond decades, from 1920 to 1996. Now we have a de facto situation, preparing the major change that will take effect in 1998.

The government needed to dull, numb the patient a bit. When asked to produce a database, when asked to answer some really basic questions that nowadays are very much on our conscience, such as: "Are you to save money?" the government was hard pressed to say, "No, we're not going to save any money, because the present system doesn't cost money." The government does not participate under the tutelage, under the facility of a regulated system.

The system is quite simple. If you can prove to the panel, and wish to enter the market, of course, that you will provide the citizens of Ontario with a necessity, that it will be convenient that your company enter the field, then you obviously satisfy the mandate of public necessity and convenience.

You get the Toronto-Ottawa route. Your bus company will service that route and you shall make money. In return, you will have to provide bus service for less lucrative routes in small and remote regions of for instance southwestern Ontario or northern Ontario. That's the tradeoff; that's the exchange.

The board might grant you a licence to operate a charter business so you can tap into the tourist trade. You can also satisfy the needs of special groups from time to time: a hockey club, a seniors' group. In that tradeoff the public gets served, and that's been in force since the history of Ontario—equilibrium, a balance. Given the diversity and size of our province—it's the size of a continent—you have to have a system in place that rewards entrepreneurship and yet provides the essential service.

The government has embarked on a rhetorical and ideological bent to the point where you cannot talk to them. They have stopped listening. If it's free enterprise, no matter what the subject, no matter what the service, it shall always do it better. When it doesn't satisfy the audience by way of a valuable argument, they will go to no end. They have become shroud wavers, scaring people, trying to entice people to believe that the only way to do business and the better way to do business is to go to the marketplace, without study, and let them regulate their own industry and let them decide whether or not we shall have the service. So little study has been done.

I want to tell you a true story of what's about to happen. The sister provinces, to the west Manitoba, to the east Quebec—we're squeezed in between Manitoba and Quebec. They do not have a deregulated system. They have no intentions at present to go to a deregulated system. With this free-for-all, here's the scenario, here's the tragedy of it all.

On an evening like we often experience in late May, June, all of July and August, a bus from the sister province of Quebec pulls in at Pearson, awaiting the arrival of tourists.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: Oh, they're calling it raiding already, they're calling the playing field unlevel. But this is what will happen. They have a product made by Prévost, and

you saw those, Mr Speaker: all the bells and whistles, so well attired, so enticing. They wait for the plane to land and then they say, "Come with me"—the seduction of a better product. They gather the conglomerate, the captive audience, and say: "You wish to see Niagara Falls? That's our first stop." So the conglomerate, this *couvée*, travels to Niagara Falls, one of the wonders of this world, and the tour operator says: "Okay, you'll spend your two or three hours, for as long as the river flows. You can come back any time you wish, back on the bus, and now we take you to Quebec City for eight days." The private entrepreneur from Ontario cannot go to Quebec City and do the same thing because they have a regulated market.

The same thing applies to Manitoba. This is what Manitoba had to say, and I sadly remind you of what you already know: The government du jour, the administration, the regime, alas, democratically elected in Manitoba, is one of Progressive Conservatives. All of them resemble in their ideology about half of the Reform-Conservative which is the government du jour in Ontario at present. This is what they said in the submission to the Canadian intercity bus task force. You've arrived; if you're granted the pleasure of an audience with these people, you can say your piece.

Mr Gerretsen: What did you do about all this when you were minister?

Mr Pouliot: What did we do about it? It wasn't broken, so we didn't fix it. There was no need to do anything. Sometimes it's better to do nothing. There are two kinds of politicians that the people will not tolerate. Like my friends the Liberals, there is the kind of politician who always changes their mind, and there's the kind of politician, like those across, who shall never change their mind.

Interjection: What kind are you?

Mr Pouliot: I'm offering a balance.

Mr Gerretsen: No, I'm offering a balance.

Mr Pouliot: Mr Speaker, please, between the vultures and the jackals there has to be some sense of reason.

Let me go back to what the people in Manitoba had to say: "The specific rationale for economic regulation is clear. In an unregulated market, many communities in Manitoba would not have access to scheduled bus service, or would receive inadequate or unaffordable service due to insufficient passenger volumes and revenues in relation to cost." Those are the people outside of the city of Winnipeg: would not have access, would receive inadequate service.

1630

The province of Quebec, the neighbouring province to the east, says, "Please do not limit the bus services to the most profitable routes." It's commonsensical, it speaks for itself, and yet they're about to embark on the system. What will happen? Let's gaze at our crystal ball. Let's speculate, maybe not so hypothetically, unfortunately.

At first, there will be a lot of players, a lot of people who have honestly been waiting and will see that as a deserving chance to enter the marketplace. Competition will get fierce, markets will experience some cycles—good times, bad times, fat years, lean years. When the lean years hit in the cycle, drivers will be asked to take a rollback, safety will be compromised, not because

people wish deliberately or have a systematic plan to have a negative impact on safety, but simply because when you're competing from hand to mouth before you shut the shop down, safety will not be as much of a priority as it should be.

The weak ones will go by way of bankruptcy. There will be unprecedented dislocation in the marketplace, some entrepreneur's dream will be shattered never to return again, drivers will be let go by the thousands, indeed, and the vultures will gather, and what has been fair competition will become survival of the fittest and they will descend on that carcass at the marketplace and pick every little bit of meat left on that bone. And who will have to carry the guilt but the minister? Someone has to shoulder the blame. This is what happened—

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Are you talking about the vultures?

Mr Len Wood: No, he's talking about the Tories.

Mr Miclash: That's what I mean. Are you talking about the vultures?

Mr Pouliot: Will you please extend the courtesy to keep your mouth shut while other people are speaking?

This is what some of the major players are saying. It's not my quote. This is what they are saying. You'll recognize the owner of Penetang-Midland Coach Lines, probably the second-largest operator in the province of Ontario. His quote: "Deregulation hasn't worked in the trucking industry, it hasn't worked in the airline industry and it hasn't worked in the rail industry. What makes them think it will work in the bus industry?" More bluntly, straight to the point, he says, "Rural Ontario is going to suffer if intercity bus service is deregulated."

Jim Devlin; Mr Devlin is not a card-carrying member of the New Democratic Party. With high respect to Mr Devlin, this is what he says, and he's the president of Trentway-Wagar, probably the third largest, a player of significance, a player of consequence—Jim knows what he's talking about; one thing I'll say about Jim, he knows intercity busing—simply put, "I am not in favour of deregulation." "Do you like it? Don't you like it?" "No, I don't like it."

Reg DeNure, past president of the Ontario Motor Coach Association and the owner of Chatham Coach Lines, says, "If it isn't broken, why fix it?"

Gino Defent, president of Gino's Bus Line, a family corporation built from ground zero, tells us the larger companies "are definitely going to drop" routes.

George Payne, Ontario Northland, the Ontario Motor Coach Association, Greyhound—the litany, the plea for common sense is widespread and unanimous.

The minister says, "Well, we'll leave it to the industry, and we'll have more enforcement on safety." Those are good words for the gallery, but it doesn't augur too well; it doesn't bode well for the future.

On the one hand, you're laying off. You're giving pink slips to 1,200 employees presently with the Ministry of Transportation, and you voice the contradiction that we will have more safety. We'll have fewer people for enforcement. But fear is a motivator. If you're afraid to get caught, if you're afraid to get fined, you're highly more likely to fix the rig.

I don't wish to remind anyone or to be reminded by anyone that when buses carrying people—when the wheels literally fall off, like we read in the papers not too long ago and saw on television what happened when those monster trucks became killer trucks because they lost their wheels.

Can you imagine? I don't want to have to face an incident because of negligence, because of a lack of safety application resulting in the maiming or even loss of life; certainly not. But if it happens, fingers will be pointed at people and people will be asked to carry the guilt, and in some extreme mention it might be conveyed that someone is responsible and has blood on his hands.

Who are the people who take the bus? Who are the people who will be left if the rug is pulled from under them because deregulation says, "If I can't make money, I'll go with the big routes: Toronto-Montreal, Toronto-Ottawa, Toronto-Sudbury-Ottawa, Toronto-Peterborough?"

And the rest of us: "Well, better luck next time. You choose to live where you do. You're good to cut trees. You're good to do some farming on your 150 acres and pray for good weather. You're good to go down 4,000 feet underground and extract the minerals; our economy is resource-based. You're good to do all that, the hand that gives." But when it's time to have an essential service, "Well, sorry, you're not one of us."

Time waits for no one. Harry can no longer drive a car. No, he didn't lose his licence. They had a little bit of a family gathering at Easter and Christmas and one of his beloved children said, "Dad, maybe you should think about safety, yours and the safety of others. Maybe you shouldn't drive any more."

1640

Harry has a doctor's appointment. He has to be monitored. He's got to see the doctor every three months. Harry's not rich. It's only in the past 15 or 20 years that people started to receive a fair wage for their labour. He has a large family. He's an honourable citizen, so he uses the democratic class—he takes the bus and he goes for his medical appointment. But the bus line does not make any money, because it's not into the regulated system where they can exchange the line from point A to point B, losing a few dollars so they can make quite a few more dollars on another line. That's where the tradeoff is. Now you're on your own. So Harry doesn't have the service.

I talked about Miss Jones. This will cut her off from mainstream Ontario. Now she's got to go back and try to get pills for two months, but the pharmacist will only give them for one month. Now she's going back in the apartment. Is she coming out again? I don't know. She's 74. She can't take the bus, though. She can't take the bus; it's no longer there. The students: the same thing. So the seniors—in the ditch.

Why? Why when it need not happen? Regulation does not cost anything to anyone. It's an arrangement. It's a tradeoff. It provides services to people.

Manitoba won't play the game. Because they are regulated, we will not have access to their market. Quebec will not join. You have no uniformity. You'll be left alone and you'll be left holding the bag.

It simply does not add up. It's not that it's bad, it's not that the government wishes to punish people; it's simply that we searched long and hard to find a rationale associated with the changeover from regulation to a free-for-all, and we were unable to really find any. The data-bank, made up of coalitions, lawyers—and all my files will attest to that—is saying it simply does not add up.

You will be isolated. People will come and raid you. The entrepreneurs will say, "I cannot reciprocate." They'll be calling you and saying, "Come on with me, come out to Pearson and see eight, 10 buses from the province of Quebec—count them—and two more coming." Then we will go to Dorval or Mirabel and we will see no Ontario buses because they are not allowed to operate under regulated conditions. It's as simple as that.

If someone says, "Prince Charming will come calling; they will be so nice; because we allow them our market, they will reciprocate," well, when your phone doesn't ring, you will know that it's them calling, because it will be a buck, a buck, a buck and a buck again. There's no getting away from it. They will pick the good routes at the expense of people in northern Ontario, at the expense of people in southwestern Ontario and southeastern Ontario. If you don't live in Ottawa, if you don't live in Toronto, out the door. That's six million out of 11 million Ontarians. If you're not an urbanite, you don't belong here. If you don't subsidize the Toronto Club or the Albany Club, you're lucky if you have a Royal Canadian Legion where you live.

They're on such a bender, on such a bent. They are driven by an ideology. Half their caucus reads that mantra, that manifesto, and every day before they go to sleep, instead of counting sheep they go off the precipice, only to be recycled the next day. If Mike Harris says, "Members of the cult, have you read the mantra?" they have to say in their daily pilgrimage to the Premier's office, "Yes, Mike, I have," and that dictates their every move.

Hier encore, in yesteryears it was different. This is a system that has been in place since 1920 that helped the development of Ontario and the transportation of Ontarians. It is a system that is proven. If it was true in 1920, in 1970 and is still true in 1996, is still true in Manitoba and adhered to by our sister province of Quebec as well, why do we insist on a difference when we have a lose-lose situation?

On behalf of seniors, on behalf of students, on behalf of those who have subsidized and patronized the bus industry and on behalf of the most democratic class of transportation, I plead with the government of the day not to penalize seniors, do not negatively impact the marginalized, those who have less. Respect what has been done since 1920. Do not turn your back and hurt people by virtue of rhetoric and ideology. I have welcomed and appreciated the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd like to compliment the member for Lake Nipigon on a most entertaining and convincing speech. I would give it an A+++. However, the content has a lot to be desired. He sort of missed on the content, which is most unfortunate.

He made reference to survival of the fittest, and I would think that is quite natural when you live in northern Ontario. I fail to understand why he would object to working in that particular direction.

He claims that deregulation hasn't worked in many other industries. I'm not sure what he was examining, when deregulation seems to have worked very well. What hasn't worked well are monopolies, and in this bill we're really talking about getting rid of some monopolies.

He listed various companies which indicated that they were not objecting. As a matter of fact, they want to keep regulations in place. I'm not surprised at all that some of these companies would want to keep those regulations in place, because the regulations protect them and guarantee them a good profit without necessarily providing a good service or ensuring there is one to the communities they serve.

He mentioned that if it isn't broken, don't fix it. Tell that to some of those 400 communities that have lost busing service since 1980. They believe it's broken, and it really is.

Talk about safety and deregulation really relates to more fearmongering than anything else. We are not talking about safety here; we're talking about taking away monopolies when, with this regulation, safety will be increased. We really need what this bill is talking about: the protection of customers, giving them better service at a better price.

1650

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I'd like to rise in support of the comments of our colleague the member for Lake Nipigon. Not only was his speech well delivered, I think it contained some content that's worthy of listening to.

I too have heard from small operators. I come from a rural community that's concerned we're going to lose not only the scheduled bus service, as limited as it is, but charter services in my community, because we're in a border region that has concerns about this bill.

I just ask the government why, in view of all that has been said by us on this side, you as well can't listen very simply to a survey conducted by the Ontario Motor Coach Association. It indicated that the members are not necessarily opposed to competition, but feel outright deregulation would compromise safe operating and maintenance standards, and would greatly diminish the role of Ontario carriers who would face unfair competition from out-of-province carriers who are operating under more favourable structures, tax rules and operating standards.

I just ask that the government take those comments into account as well as those given by the member for Lake Nipigon and others in several days of debate.

Mr Len Wood: It's a pleasure to comment on the member for Lake Nipigon. As people are probably aware, our ridings border on each other, and going back in 1988, we campaigned together in the federal election. I know the riding of Lake Nipigon very well and the small communities he's concerned about that are going to lose the bus service for the students, the seniors, the disabled.

It's going to happen. I mean, it happened in the United States that the small communities where they deregulated

the buses are left shut in. They can't afford airline tickets; they can't afford to buy cars, or if they're disabled, they're not able to drive them. As a result, parents are separated from their children, relatives are separated from each other and there is no way of getting around northern Ontario when you see this first step in the move to completely deregulate the bus industry in Ontario.

I know from listening to what the member for Lake Nipigon has said that it's not only northern Ontario that's going to feel the impact of this. I know even in the county of Perth, in the county of Huron, a lot of these small communities that are represented by Conservative members right now are going to feel the pinch and the anger, because I'm getting calls. I have a lot of relatives throughout those two counties and they're calling me and they're saying, "Len, why can't you do something to stop the Conservatives from harming these small communities?" It's not only in northern Ontario, but it's in southern Ontario as well, in the county of Perth and the county of Huron that are going to suffer. I said, "We'll do what we can, but you have to talk to your Conservative backbenchers and give them the message of how the Tories are hurting southern Ontario as well as northern Ontario."

Mr Ouellette: A couple of points I should address. As my other fellow colleague mentioned about the eloquent presentation, there are certain things that should be brought forward, such as essential services. What are essential services? Is once a month an essential service? Is that providing, or are we actually giving an area where we can protect the supplier at that time so they can ensure that they have the charter rights for that area? That doesn't allow other individuals into that area. What we're doing is providing an opportunity for that to take place.

Also, he mentioned about the marketplace and no studying. Strange; this is April 1996, yet it happens in 1998. That's plenty of time to see what the implications are going to be and how things are handled at that time.

As the former Minister of Transportation, he should know very well that when you're dealing with Quebec and Manitoba coming in Ontario, that's federal legislation, that's federal regulation. Up to 80% of the busing industry that takes place in the province of Ontario at this time is regulated by the federal government and not the province. Those are some of the things he should know or he should have brought forward.

Also, he speaks about individuals who change their minds or individuals who say, "Why should we deal with this, because it's not broken," since the 1920s. What we have presented is an open mind so that we can deal with the changes necessary to bring economic benefit to this province.

Safety is always a concern and always will be a concern, a top priority in the Ministry of Transportation, and we will never deviate from that.

Also very quickly, southwestern Ontario: A small community approached the bus company at that time and asked what the going rate was for the transportation services. They gave them a quote and they said it was very high—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon would like two minutes.

Mr Pouliot: Thank you, sincerely, to members who have had the patience to be here for my humble contribution and, further, who have commented. I wish to leave you with what Freedom to Move has to say. Freedom to Move are good Samaritans. They're a coalition. They represent the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations, the Amalgamated Transit Union, the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario, the United Transportation Union and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): A lot of unions.

Mr Pouliot: Well, they've been very effectively making the case for regulation and they also represent those who will be hurt, those who are vulnerable because they don't have a choice; they must rely on bus service.

They say we will have more and more seniors who can't drive a car; students will still be dependent on bus transportation; more and more parcels will travel by mail, to some extent via bus service. Small towns: They say—food for thought for the Conservative backbenchers—the communities that will be the most severely impacted are Essex, Lambton, Elgin, Haldimand, Oxford, Perth, Huron and Wellington counties, followed by northern Ontario, Cochrane and Superior. That's food for thought.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Galt: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be able to say a few words on Bill 39, An Act to amend the Ontario Highway Transport Board Act and the Public Vehicles Act and to make consequential changes to certain other Acts.

My interest in this particular bill has mostly to do with the intercity bus deregulation. What we're really talking about is allowing the marketplace to decide what is best. I hear some discussion from the opposition, who are really worried about the marketplace, really fearful that the marketplace might not be able to do the right thing out there. They seem to want to be supportive of monopolies, and that just does not work in this country.

The marketplace will provide an opportunity for travellers and for customers, who want the best service at the best price. It will provide an opportunity for busing companies willing to meet the best service for the best possible price, rather than hiding behind monopolies and the regulations that are presently in place.

We're talking about things like the scheduled routes, the charters, the tour routes and parcel express here in Ontario, all of which are very important links in the province.

Deregulation, getting rid of some of these regulations, is certainly consistent with the initiatives of this government that we represent. We want desperately to get rid of the unfair regulatory burden that's been placed on this province and we want to reduce the bureaucracy that we've been labouring under for some time. If at all possible, it would be really nice if we could eliminate the red tape that has been hampering business in the province of Ontario. If we can do that, we will indeed stimulate the economic growth of this province, we'll stimulate the economy and investment, we'll stimulate job creation, and we will do that by removing many of these barriers. If we can do this, small-town Ontario will be better off

and I believe that small-town Ontario deserves better than it has been receiving.

1700

We've been hearing various complaints about the present system of intercity busing here in the province of Ontario. People have been complaining, concerned about the high prices and the poor services that they've been receiving. That is not too surprising when you look at the monopoly or partial monopoly that's present in many of these routes. It's just a natural thing that does happen when monopolies are there.

They're concerned about the lack of scheduled service. For example, from Morrisburg to Ottawa, an area that I'm sure the opposition recognizes very well, how often can they make, with present regulations, a trip to Ottawa and back in a week? Once. One day per week there is a run. Give some other companies an opportunity and there may be several trips a week that they can go to Ottawa and back.

Right now, it stunts growth and investment. Small companies do not have the opportunity to compete and get involved in some of these routes. Because of the regulations that are presently in place, large companies are able to block out small companies from coming in and competing.

The present system is also expensive for the government. Recently, a company wanted to run a charter in a community. They were blocked, they weren't able to, and they finally did just illegally start operating. It took 10 person-years in the courts by the Ontario government to finally develop appropriate sanctions for that particular infraction. These are the kind of circles we do not need to be operating in this province. These are the kinds of barriers that have been holding back this province from moving ahead and stimulating jobs and getting the economy back on track.

The present regulations lack flexibility. For example, tour operators are unable to schedule and get a bus company to go across Ontario because there are many areas that they cannot take a bus into because of the monopoly and what's being kept out because of regulations.

The question becomes, what happens when we do deregulate? How will it work here in the province of Ontario? The opposition and third party members have been suggesting that what has happened in the past has been all wrong with deregulation when in fact it hasn't been all wrong. As a matter of fact, it's worked out very, very well. There were many reasons back in the 1970s and 1980s why deregulation came in in other modes of transportation and probably it would have been wise if we had deregulated intercity busing at that time.

Regulations protect the provider. It lacks customer interest and customer service. Deregulation will maximize the benefits for our users. It will reduce the monopoly effect and it will increase competition. The marketplace has been the mother of invention. All kinds of original things happen because of competition in the marketplace.

Generally, monopolies do not serve as well. Take, for example, Ontario Hydro, which has had a monopoly for a very, very long time. I would suggest that we need some competition there, and we're not talking about, "Is it public versus private?" No, we're talking about monop-

oly. Does it rate some competition? I would suggest with what has happened with the Ford Motor Co, for example, producing cars in some 17 regions of North America, Mexico, US and Canada, in 1986 Ontario was the cheapest hydro or electricity that they had in any of those 17 regions. Today, they tell me they have dropped to number 12, well below the average price for electricity in North America. That is what happens when we have monopolies without competition.

Similarly, the competition with the LCBO—very ideal to have some competition with an organization such as LCBO. We don't have to be talking about privatization but we can talk about competition.

There is a place for monopolies such as when Ontario Hydro first started, ideal to give them protection when they started out; ideal to give LCBO protection back in the days when they required really stringent market control. That was society's concern at that point in time, and it did in fact work very well as they started to sell liquor through those outlets.

Probably the regulations that were in place in 1920 to protect intercity busing were very much in order and did work very well at it started out. As I mentioned, busing regulations have been in place since the 1920s, and that has limited the market entry; and that's been unfortunate. In recent years, there's a restriction to market entry. I mentioned earlier, it protects the operators with licences and it protects them for very special purposes.

The present system, as mentioned earlier, if it's not broken, let's not fix it. I suggest to you that it is broken and it is time that it was fixed, because it is outdated and it is inefficient.

Scheduled services in small-town Ontario are not protected with present regulations. According to the federal government, from back in 1980 some 400 communities have lost services for intercity busing. Those 400 communities are very concerned about this, and with the present regulation there's absolutely no protection in them to ensure that there will be intercity busing serving those communities. All they have to do is announce for 10 days and stop the buses running. There's no requirement of the minister to say aye, yes or no; they just pull the buses off the road. That's the kind of regulation that we have in this province today.

There's a growing demand for charters and tours. In this province of Ontario, tourism could become a number one industry. We have a unique province, a province with all kinds of natural beauty; and I for one believe that we could take advantage of that kind of beauty and attract tourists to this country if we could change some of the charter tour regulations and get more buses rolling to be involved with the tourist industry.

Competition controls prices and reduces service. New, innovative ideas would meet the client needs of today.

Implementation of this particular bill on January 1, 1998, will give adequate time to the various bus companies to set up and get organized for the change in regulations. As a matter of fact, this was even announced back in October 1995 so there's going to be over two years for the bus companies to get ready, and actually by the time this bill receives royal assent they'll still have a year and a half. This government supports orderly

transition to a deregulated state, allowing existing carriers time to adjust to the changes, and many of these carriers already serve in areas where deregulation has occurred. We encourage sustainable, locally based services responding to the needs of small-town Ontario.

One of the ways to market innovation that has occurred in other areas is the so-called hub-and-spoke service whereby feeder bus lines, small buses, bring in passengers to central areas similar to what is operated with airlines, and that has operated very successfully. Currently, it seems, the thinking is that we use only big highway coaches, when in fact many small vans, small buses could provide a service to a central area.

In the interim with this bill once passed, I believe that the services will be at least maintained at the present level or may even increase to small-town Ontario. At least with only one direction that they should go, it shouldn't continue to disappear, as it has been.

During this interim period, there'll be a 30-day notice for any decrease in service to any community, and if there's going to be an abandoned route, it should be a requirement of a 90-day notice and the company is expected to join with the community in search of a replacement service.

1710

This certainly is going to provide the community with a lot more time than they've had in the past—in the past it's been simply 10 days—and also some assurance from the present carriers that they will provide some help to try and find an alternative service for that community. I believe this will provide some increased busing stability during that interim while communities and bus companies get ready and prepare themselves for deregulated intercity busing come January 1, 1998.

We do believe in bus safety. With this new bill, there will be enhanced bus safety. It will ensure the safety performance of all operators. There will be increased fines for truck and bus safety offences, there will be regular on-road bus inspection blitzes, and there will be expansion of the demerit point system for buses and for trucks.

In summary, I believe this bill will ensure that the services we presently have will be at least maintained and there will be some coordination with the community when those companies decide to withdraw their services, and it won't be just within 10 days. The community will have up to three months to work with the company to come up with some alternative arrangement. This bill will set the stage for deregulation of the intercity busing industry come January 1, 1998, and will give some adequate time for that.

Deregulation will provide the marketplace with the opportunity to decide what is best both for the bus operators and for the needs of the community. The needs of the customer, whether they're moving from town A to town B and how many will be moving, will dictate the size of the bus, whether it be a feeder bus or whether it be a main-line coach that will be offered.

This bill, once it gets rolling in 1998, will promote tourism. It will make it much simpler for tour operators to go out and tender and get charter buses to travel across Ontario. I believe the free marketplace with competition is the mother of invention, and that is indeed what is

needed for intercity busing here in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: We've heard a lot of comments, not only from this member but also from the member for Oshawa earlier, about the fact that what they're really against are monopolies. Let me first of all say that I don't think there's a member in the House here who would favour a monopoly, particularly now that we're in the 1990s. That's not the issue. That is not the issue.

The issue is not whether or not, on profitable routes, other companies should be able to share in that. I'm totally in favour of that. The real issue is, how do you protect the small communities that will be losing their services, that have that once-a-month service right now? The member for Oshawa tried to indicate that if you somehow open it up, the service would no longer be once a month, but will be every day or every second day or once a week or whatever. Why do you think it's once a month right now? Because it doesn't pay the bus line to go in there more than once a month, and they're being forced to go in there because they're doing a more profitable route at the same time. That's where the issue is.

The problem in this whole act is that you haven't looked at the entire situation. If you had looked at the whole scene and not only looked at the monopoly aspects of it but also how you protect the smaller communities out there, and had come back with a comprehensive plan where you addressed the real issues that have been raised by the members of the opposition, I think you would get some support for what you're doing.

There will be no problem in bus companies going into the lucrative lines. The problem has always been, how do you make sure the small communities that are in non-lucrative areas where there isn't a lot of ridership get service? The only way you can do that is by making sure that the lucrative lines, lucrative services etc, supply service to the smaller communities as well.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have to say to the member directly that the problem with what the government is doing, and I try to put this as succinctly as I can, is that the policy you're trying to put in place is almost like one size fits all. I don't argue with what you think is going to work in major markets such as Toronto and Hamilton, where you have the population base to support the kind of competition you're talking about, with a multitude of carriers. Deregulation will probably work in some of those cases. The problem really is that you're going to end up in a situation, in markets like northern Ontario, in some places in eastern and southwestern and central Ontario, where the market is not large enough to sustain a multitude of carriers, and what will happen is basically what carriers are telling me in my own constituency.

I met this weekend with the operators of two different bus lines. One of them runs up along the Highway 11 corridor and he's saying: "Listen, there isn't enough market there for me to be in full competition with somebody else. If you as a Conservative government allow that to happen, we're going to be in a position as operators where we have to reconcentrate our businesses

to the more lucrative routes only and the smaller ones will fall by the wayside."

These are operators saying this. This is not Gilles Bisson, the member for Cochrane South, New Democratic Party; these are the people who are now in the business, the private sector. The problem in your approach is that you're saying, "We have a vision that is different from all that history has taught us when it comes to transportation systems in this province and in this country."

I say to the member that yes, if you want to make some changes I'm willing, as a New Democrat, to support you in partial deregulation in the more lucrative markets. But if you're saying you have an approach that you think is going to work in Toronto and you want to transplant that policy into areas like northeastern Ontario, I say buyer beware; we're going to be in a situation, as the member for Nipigon and others have said, where small communities are left by the wayside because the markets are not large enough to respond to.

Mr Stockwell: I want to compliment the member for Northumberland with respect to his outline of the issues and concerns he sees with respect to this bill.

I think what the opposition fails to understand and to realize, I say directly to the member for Kingston and The Islands and to the member for Cochrane South, is that by defending the status quo you're slowly losing lines as it is. Lines are slowly shutting down. I think the issue has been addressed by the member for Oshawa where he outlined that 400 lines have shut down since 1980. We've had regulations, we've had processes put in place to do exactly what you've been arguing for these last number of days and 400 lines have shut down since 1980.

Ultimately we on this side of the House do care, because if you maintain the status quo what happens is that by attrition, slowly over a period of time, all that's left are the lucrative routes anyway. It's been proven. They say they want to look at history and they want to address the issues from a historical sense, but if you truly looked at it from a historical sense, you'd see that what you're recommending, the status quo, hasn't worked.

I would have a lot more respect for the members opposite if, rather than standing in their places and slamming the government for its position in this bill, they came forward and said, "Hey, I don't think this bill is going to work, but to stem the flow, to stop the tide, we would recommend X, Y and Z." As chicken-hearted as the Liberals and the NDP have always been, they don't have it in them to offer a sensible alternative for fear that someone in this province may disagree with them, and if someone disagrees with them, we know their backbones turn to jelly.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I wonder whether the members opposite realize that there are a lot of private entrepreneurs in this industry already and that a lot of private entrepreneurs do not think the government knows what it's doing. If you really want to find out how to deal with this problem of providing better service to more people, have them sit down at the table and let them come forward with a recommendation, because most of them think this bill is a joke. They don't think the government knows what it's doing, because the people in

favour of deregulation say you've betrayed them because they were expecting deregulation.

The ones who oppose it say this is going to do nothing but create havoc, and then how are you ever going to keep Quebecers from coming in here and taking business out of Ontario? You can't keep them from coming across the border in Ottawa when they're all working on the Ottawa side. You won't move on that. How are you ever going to move on the buses? You won't do it, so what will happen is the out-of-province industry will come in here and take business out of Ontario. You won't do anything to protect them and they cannot protect themselves, because the rules are different in Manitoba and the rules are different in Quebec.

That's what the private entrepreneurs are telling you. In essence you don't know what you're doing. You haven't listened to the pros in the industry; you've listened to a couple of people and that's all. If you bring in the people who have got their money at risk here and listen to them, you will get some pretty good advice of what to do, and they will tell you, if we have hearings on this, that this government on this issue is really creating havoc and that they're not taken into account.

If you want real deregulation, perhaps you should look at the competition you're giving the private sector already. If you're really serious about it, you've got the biggest competition of all. You've got that monopoly called GO Transit, if you are really serious about it. What are you going to do with GO Transit, get rid of that too?

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Northumberland has two minutes.

Mr Galt: Just responding to the member for Kingston and The Islands talking about the monopolies, we can talk about a limited number entering a given area. To me that's a monopoly or a partial monopoly, depending how you want to look at it. All you are doing is objecting. The member for Etobicoke West pointed out that part of your responsibility in opposition is to provide some alternative suggestions. You haven't suggested one alternative yet. That's what you should be doing rather than just sitting there opposing everything we are trying to do.

1720

The Cochrane South member comments about a problem in the north, that the markets are too small. Maybe if we put on small buses and recognized the proper size of the community and what's there, it might work out quite well, rather than hanging on to the so-called monopoly we've been working with.

Our member for Oakwood talks about coming in from Quebec and coming in from the US. If you'd been here a little earlier, you would have found out that this happens to be a federal problem. That is a federal—

Mr Colle: He wants to get rid of a monopoly.

Mr Galt: If the member for Oakwood would quit talking, maybe he could understand what I'm trying to tell him.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: I did hear and I'm trying to respond to you. Coming in from the US and coming in from Quebec is a federal regulation. That is not a provincial regulation, and that was explained to you earlier. You're complaining about that, but that's the way it is. This is not a provin-

cial thing and it's not changing with Bill 39; it happens to be a federal regulation. If you really want to get it sorted out, I suggest that maybe you get hold of your friend Sheila Copps. I'm sure she'd be able to help you sort it out. Depending which side of the fence she happened to be sitting on, I'm sure she'd give you a hand.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm pleased to rise today and join the debate on Bill 39, an act intended to begin the process of deregulation of intercity bus transportation, and to offer another northern Ontario perspective on what these changes might mean. It's startling to stand up here as a member from northern Ontario. I've been listening to my colleagues from the north, and from rural and eastern and southern Ontario, commenting on the fact that this government continually trivializes and mocks the great concerns we have about issues like this. There's no question that this government has absolutely no understanding of what the needs are of the people in the north, the people in the rural areas, the people in the smaller communities.

Interjections.

Mr Gravelle: It's evident by the way we listen to the comments that are made by members in response.

Interjections.

Mr Gravelle: I accept your apology. That was interesting, wasn't it?

Northern Ontario, in a geographic sense, is not unlike a bit of a frontier, it seems, for a lot of people still. It's expansive, held together by a web of transportation networks that become all the more crucial because of the reduced frequency of the options. If we're talking about options just in a pure sense of what options one has for travel, in southern Ontario, when you're moving from one community to another, generally speaking there are various options. You define that one is impassable; you can use another route to get there.

In northern Ontario, we simply are provided with significantly fewer options in how we get places. We're limited to two major options in terms of the highways: Highway 11 and Highway 17. Our selection usually depends simply on where we live. To get from North Bay to Kirkland Lake, you would take Highway 11; to get from Blind River to Wawa, you'd take Highway 17; Thunder Bay to Dryden, Highway 17.

What people don't seem to realize is that there are communities like Armstrong in my riding up Highway 527, a road that absolutely relies on bus transportation. If this government goes ahead and does what it says it's going to do, we risk completely cutting off Armstrong from the rest of this province.

There's Nakina, there's Hornepayne, Pickle Lake, Red Lake; there are all these communities. It's extraordinary that this government seems to have simply forgotten that these communities exist. Mind you, having said that, we've been watching that for the last 10 months.

When you look at the whole issue of service and the loss of service—because that's what this economic deregulation of the bus industry will mean—northern Ontarians rely heavily on these few existing options, and that needs to be understood. But like so many other policy changes that have been served up by this govern-

ment in the name of downsizing, this issue does nothing more for northern Ontario than represent a move from what is certain—ie, catching the bus at 8 o'clock from Nipigon to Thunder Bay, for example—to what is uncertain, from bus service options that are there today to bus service options that may not be there at all tomorrow.

Those of us in the north are growing increasingly tired of watching this government pretend it has a concern about all of the province. With Bill 39, the government is asking northerners to wait and see, to trust them to look out for their interests, to expect better service for less, but we have been burned before and, with Bill 39, I expect we'll get burned again.

It's my opinion, not unlike the opinion shared by many of my colleagues sitting on this side of the House and, I hope, some of my colleagues sitting on the government side of the House, that northern Ontario has either been ravaged or perpetually ignored by this government, particularly in the area of transportation and northern development.

It's probably useful for us to review what we've seen in the area of transportation in less than a year since this government came into power: first of all, extraordinary changes in the way the government manages its winter road maintenance services. We watched as the Minister of Transportation announced cuts to patrols from 24 to 16 hours, and announced that the distance travelling needs of those who drive the roads trying to warn us of the dangers would be expanded extraordinarily. We watched, in one of the more horrible winters we've had in some time in terms of snow and ice and highway closures, as the service declined, declined, declined. Northerners spoke up all across the province. This government did not listen.

We've watched as this minister and this government have cancelled or postponed incredibly much-needed highway work, such as road improvements between Kenora and Dryden or Longlac and Geraldton—those of us who have driven on those roads know how much they're needed—

Mr Colle: Potholes everywhere.

Mr Gravelle: —and the cancellation of four-laning plans for Highway 69. Potholes everywhere, as my colleague from Oakwood says. Extraordinary, and this government is just simply abrogating its responsibility in that area.

In my riding in particular in terms of road work that's needed, I've received all kinds of comments. I've driven the roads myself consistently. Highway 102, or Dawson Road as we know it in Thunder Bay: People are afraid to drive on that road now. My constituent Jim Suffak has written me about this. I think we need to get the minister to recognize that this work must go forward. It's not happening; it's not going forward.

Highway 587, our road into Sibley, a tourist attraction—Sleeping Giant Provincial Park, an incredibly important tourist attraction to those in northern Ontario. The roads are in terrible condition and need to be fixed up. It isn't happening.

Then we watch as the Minister of Transportation pulls out \$20 million from the northern highway fund.

Mr Colle: Twenty million?

Mr Gravelle: Twenty million over the next two years.

Mr Colle: Is that on top of the \$60 million?

Mr Gravelle: That's on top of the \$60 million. It's \$80 million, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines then tells us, "Oh, well, we'll use the heritage fund's money to spend on highway infrastructure," instead of what it should be for.

Mr Bisson: This is what we need for economic development.

Mr Gravelle: Absolutely. This is what we need for economic development, and it's just being taken away from us. It's certainly not an impressive track record to date. There's no reason in the world why we should begin to trust that this particular bill will also not continue to do damage to those who absolutely need the services. As it was so eloquently stated by my colleague from Lake Nipigon and my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, people who need this service have no other options.

1730

So we have Bill 39, a bill that will likely have serious ramifications on the number of transportation options open to northerners. How about the seniors in Manitouwadge coming to Thunder Bay for health reasons? What does this bill mean? For students travelling from Hearst to Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, what does it mean? In all likelihood, it just simply means less service or no service at all, because we all know that in the dog-eat-dog world of business competition only the strong survive. Surely in northern Ontario, with fewer consumers and longer distances to travel, many of the bus services we now have access to will disappear as a result of deregulation. Why would companies who no longer have to, as part of a licensing obligation, provide services to communities at unprofitable rates?

Of course, the Minister of Transportation is quick to dispel any such fears. He talks of market forces being such that local entrepreneurs will jump on the bandwagon to provide service should larger companies decide to bow out. But how can smaller companies expect to provide services on a line that is unprofitable? It's just another example of this government's lack of concern for those parts of the north that need the help, those parts of the province. It's so enlightening for me, I might say, as a northerner to listen to my colleagues who talk about the needs in the other parts of the province.

There are so many other concerns that simply are astonishing in terms of this. My continuing concern is what measures the government would consider bringing in to guarantee the provision of services to communities across northern Ontario should new providers suddenly decide that these routes aren't profitable. We watch it with norOntair, and one of our concerns with the taking away of service to norOntair, the public support of that, is indeed yes, the minister has managed to find some private companies to provide that service, and we are very glad that has happened, but we are looking for the guarantees that will continue to provide that service if they are not able to continue that. This government seems to want to just simply drift away from those responsibilities, no longer simply wants to be there for the people

that it's supposed to be serving. The government certainly has come forward with no guarantees in terms of Bill 39.

When you look at the case of the Ontario Northlander, part of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, we also continue to get very mixed messages in terms of bus service in northern Ontario. How does the Ontario Northlander, a publicly owned and funded bus line that serves the smaller communities in northeastern Ontario, fit into a new Ontario without economic regulations in place for its bus industry? Well, according to the 1996 business plan for the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, "The anticipated deregulation of the bus industry is a serious threat to bus operations." But according to Ministry of Transportation staff, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission welcomes competition.

I'm confused. We're hearing two arguments, two points; it's hard to understand what is the case. It's very confusing. I'd like to ask the Minister of Northern Development and Mines what the long-term expected viability of the Northlander is, but he's not here. On many northern Ontario issues he's highly confused, can't answer them himself anyway.

My understanding of the Ontario Northlander, which is supposed to be self-sustaining, is that it has a monopoly on the route between Toronto and North Bay, and that this bread-and-butter line is equalizing losses on all its other northern Ontario routes. Open up competition on this money-making line and suddenly the Ontario Northlander is no more, and northern Ontario is left with less or no bus service options and the southern Ontario-based policy bias continues in this government.

It's important that people understand that we are talking about people who have no other options. We are talking about the seniors. We are talking about the disabled. We are talking about people who don't have access to a car. We're talking about a part of the province in northern Ontario where we no longer have the option of train travel. This government continues to be insensitive to those concerns.

I am going to be standing up here and voting against this legislation, as I know my colleagues are, and I ask all of you across the floor there to consider the same thing for all the good reasons that have been articulated today.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: I was unfortunately not in my seat and able to get to here quickly enough, so I appreciate you taking the opportunity to recognizing me.

I just want to compliment the member from northwestern Ontario in regard to the comments that he made around deregulation. As northerners we understand this because we've had to face the issue of the distance between our ridings on a daily basis in regard to how we do our business as members in our ridings and how people within those ridings have to interact to access everything from health care services, or even to do their banking or their shopping.

I think what the government needs to hear, I think what most members on this side of the House are saying, is that we understand there may need to be some changes made—I don't think that's what the big argument is

here—but what you're doing is that you're moving, and I say it again, to say we have a one-step approach, we have a one-size-fits-all approach to the question of regulation and to where we're going to move from a regulated system now that incorporates private sector entrepreneurs in the bus industry to a system that's totally deregulated.

I think what members have to understand is there is a price to doing that. If the government was saying, "Listen, we think there are some better ways to work with the regulations so that we allow a freer system of transportation when it comes to regulation in the major markets," I think most members, including the New Democratic members of my caucus, would be prepared to sit down and to look at how we can do that. I think there are some compelling arguments in large markets, where you've got the density of population and the ridership to sustain that; there may be some moves to be able to relax regulations in some cases.

But in a lot of communities in northern Ontario and eastern Ontario, southwestern and central, you really don't have the market base to be able to move with full deregulation, and if the government moves that way, understand the price. The price is, those communities will be left high and dry, with no services.

Mr Duncan: It's indeed a pleasure to comment on my colleague from the great city of Thunder Bay's comments. I couldn't help but reflect on a famous son of Thunder Bay, C.D. Howe, who recognized that proper regulation and proper government regulation could create industry and allow industry to function efficiently and fairly.

We do not defend, nor have we ever defended, the status quo. This government and the member for Etobicoke West would like to suggest, perhaps, that simple deregulation will improve the bus industry, the intraprovincial transportation industry. What he fails to say and what he failed to recognize is that other Canadian jurisdictions, other American jurisdictions, states in the United States, have dealt with these same issues and rejected outright deregulation.

It would be my view, as it was the view of my colleague from the north, that re-regulation, looking at those regulations and using them to benefit the broader public interest and not simply the interests of an ideologically driven government, will ensure not only a healthy intraprovincial transportation industry but, more importantly, it will ensure that those communities that need this service as a lifeline continue to be served, where viable.

Mr Gerretsen: I would just like to pick up on a point that was made earlier as well. That relates to the whole question of a monopoly. What the members on the government side simply don't seem to understand is that they seem to be of the view that if you simply deregulate, bus companies will just rush in and start providing all sorts of service that isn't there right now. The only thing that will happen is the fact that they will simply rush into the most lucrative routes that are already there.

Let's take a look at the American experience, as to what happened there in 1982 when they deregulated. In 1982, before deregulation, there were a total of 11,820 cities and towns that had intercity bus service. After deregulation, in 1991, it was reduced to 5,690.

The point that I've been trying to make on a number of occasions here this afternoon is simply this: Yes, get rid of the monopoly situation. Yes, allow bus companies to compete with other bus companies on profitable routes, but also make sure that the smaller communities that are not now serviced or that will not be serviced with simple deregulation or, as we heard, 400 communities have been left without any service at all in the last five years, make sure that the bus companies that are taking over some of the lucrative services or are servicing the lucrative areas are also forced to service those communities that either do not have service right now or will be left out of service completely.

1740

That's the issue. That's why I come back to the point that in order to take a proper look at the situation, you've got to take a look at the entire picture. Don't just look at it strictly from a monopoly position.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Port Arthur has two minutes, if he'd like to.

Mr Gravelle: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I'd certainly like to thank the members for Cochrane South and Windsor-Walkerville and Kingston and The Islands for their kind comments and also their thoughts in terms of this issue.

I think it's clear that this government is just simply not recognizing that their responsibilities extend beyond basically thinking in terms of those who can fend for themselves. This is an issue where we're looking at people who absolutely have no other options, and it's the responsibility of this government to be sensitive to those people and those people who need this service. It extends to so many other aspects of this government that I continue to be more and more alarmed as I sit in my seat and as I stand here today.

The member for Windsor-Walkerville invoked the name of C.D. Howe. I would certainly invoke the name of Robert Andras, who was a federal representative in Thunder Bay for many, many years, with whom I worked and was very proud to work for. He was a man who basically, I know, would have been standing here as well fighting indeed for the same principles that I like to think I am.

In terms of invoking names, probably there's a couple of names that the people on the other side there should hear too. They are names from northern Ontario, northwestern Ontario, people again who will be probably telling them that their move in this particular piece of legislation is inappropriate and is wrong, and those names are George Wardrope, whom some of you may recall, and Leo Bernier, two fellows who in their day, I think, would have been standing here—perhaps if they were here and we had the Tories of old, perhaps this legislation wouldn't be being put forward.

I ask those on the other side of the House to think in terms of those people and many other people I could think of who were there trying very much to represent the interests of all the people in the province rather than the minority that this government seems very keen on adapting to. I ask the government to withdraw this legislation and rethink the whole thing.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Len Wood: It's a pleasure for me to make some comments on Bill 39, the bill that is designed to pull services out of small communities.

We all know that this is an interim measure that is intended to lead to full deregulation in the future somewhere down the road and with deregulation we've seen what has happened with the airline industry where the rates increased. When the deregulation first took place, within the first three years the rates increased about 31% and they're still going up.

If we look at what suffering the people are going to have to go through as a result of deregulating the bus industry, we know that there are coalitions that are out there right now. The coalition for senior citizens, the Amalgamated Transit Union, Canadian Federation of Students (Ontario), the United Transportation Union and the union of public service employees, have effectively made a case that deregulation would hurt the most vulnerable people in society in small northern communities.

I know there's a list of hundreds of towns that are going to lose their bus service as a result of the Harris government deregulating. Some of the towns in my community—Kapuskasung, Smooth Rock Falls. I look at other ones on the way here, Powassan, Haliburton, Huntsville. The list goes on and on and I'll get into that a little bit later on in more detail. But the people I am very concerned about are the students, the seniors, the poor people, the people who don't have a driver's licence, the people who cannot afford a driver's licence.

The bus industry right now must go through these small towns and provide a service. In turn, if they lose a little bit of money on these routes, they're able to have their charter and take the bigger routes and they make money on those and it compensates for the little bit of money they might lose in these areas.

It's not the right route to go, as far as I'm concerned. We know that both the Liberals and the Tories have deregulated air service, rail service and the trucking industry. There's more competition in the trucking industry, but we have a concern for safety. If the trucking industry is not keeping its trucks up to par and tires are falling off and they go through the inspections and hundreds of them are being pulled off the road, is this what we want to see in the bus industry when deregulation comes into full effect a year or so down the road? I don't believe that's what people would like.

I think of the university and college students who don't have any choice but to use the bus because, as I said earlier, airline tickets are out of their reach. To go out and buy a car is out of reach for most of them. So busing is the only opportunity they have to be able to get a ride home for Easter, for the March break or for long weekends, and they travel 500 or 600 miles to attend universities and colleges. I know both my daughters, who are teachers now—and I'm very proud of them—in order to get the education that they needed had to travel from Kapuskasing to Ottawa. It takes four to five years, four years of university plus a year of teacher's college, and they like to be able to travel back to the community and visit with their friends and their relatives. With what is happening here, I don't believe it's going to be possible.

It's not only in northern Ontario. We can look at some of the other communities that have just recently elected Conservative members. I'm shocked and amazed that some of the people would stand up here in the Legislature, some of the Conservative members, knowing their communities are going to lose the bus service and it's going to be a hardship on the seniors, the disabled, the poor, the students, and even those people who have to work at a low wage who depend on the bus to get them home on the weekends to spend time with their families. This service will be gone and the only choice left to them is to hitchhike or whatever. They're not going to be able to have the services they were having before. And why?

We listened to the Minister of Transportation. He's saying he's going to pass the \$450,000 that regulation costs on to the bus industry, and in turn, when you do some of these changes that are being made in order to save money, they're going to be looking at using this money to give a hearty tax break to the wealthy people who can afford to have a car or maybe even a couple of cars. It's the poor people who are going to be suffering in not only the NDP ridings in northern Ontario, but some Conservative ridings. As I mentioned earlier of the speaker who was there before, his riding in Perth county is going to be affected. The ridings in Huron county, Norfolk, Oxford, Chatham, Middlesex, Lambton, all of these counties are going to be seriously affected by the deregulation that is going to happen with Bill 39.

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I want to reflect back a little bit on some of the promises that were made. I know the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines is not here in the Legislature at this time, but he has made promises. I don't know if it's the same kind of promise that Sheila Copps made over the GST, but he promised that northerners are going to actively participate in the policy-making decisions, ensuring that their voices are heard at Queen's Park. It's not happening. The decisions are being made here by the Minister of Transportation and the Premier, Mike Harris, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I haven't seen him in the north; he hasn't been up there. He's refused to meet with the people in Cochrane who are going to lose 30 or 40 jobs at the MNR building and he's refused to meet with some other communities that are saying, "Give us five or 10 minutes of your time." In the Interim Report on Business Planning and Cost Savings Measures he said that the decisions were going to be made in these communities in northern Ontario and that their voices would be heard.

They faxed about 2,000 letters and petitions into both Premier Mike Harris's office and Minister Chris Hodgson's office, who are saying, "We don't have time to meet with these small communities." There are only 4,500 people living in the town of Cochrane, and somewhere down the road they're going to meet. Maybe they're going to wait until after the budget comes out. In any event, since April 11 they've been looking for meetings and it seems like they're being ignored by the Premier who, I might point out, is from northern Ontario is not very well respected for some of the comments and decisions he's making.

Bill 39 is a decision that is going to be detrimental to a lot of people in Ontario. I'm amazed at a lot of the Conservative members who are going to lose bus service. It's not going to be smaller buses that are going to come into the communities and bring them over to the larger bus runs; they're going to abandon these communities altogether. I would beg and plead that the Conservative caucus, in its next meeting, say to the Minister of Transportation, to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and to the Premier, "What you are doing is wrong, if all you're trying to do is cut and save enough money at the expense of all the small communities throughout Ontario in order to give a tax cut to the wealthier, upper-income people in this province."

Right after the election the Premier and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines said, "We'd like to meet with all three caucuses—the Liberal, the Conservative and the NDP—and have some input into that," but every time we or the constituents try to get some input into decision-making, the doors are closed, slammed shut, and nobody seems to be willing to take a few minutes to sit down and listen.

We know they are not only going to deregulate the bus industry and eliminate it from the towns with Bill 39, they've attacked health care and education. We've had massive layoff notices going out to the Ministry of Natural Resources and to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines employees.

They promised in their Common Sense Revolution that they were going to cut 13,000 employees, but why does all the cutting have to take place in northern Ontario? Northern Ontario has 10% of the population of the whole province, and even though 80% of the land mass is in northern Ontario, 45% of the cuts are happening there. Some of the small communities are being devastated, and we hear some of the Tory backbenchers heckling because they seem to enjoy the pain and suffering that is going to happen in these families—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): No, not true.

Mr Len Wood: —as the main breadwinner of the family is laid off and they have to disrupt their whole lives and move to other communities and try to find other work.

Mr Wettlaufer: Len, Len.

Mr Len Wood: Mr Speaker, they're still heckling and laughing about the seriousness of this.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Kitchener, come to order.

Mr Len Wood: When we're talking about Bill 39, it's disastrous to these communities. I think we should have the respect of people to listen and take their concerns, take our concerns, to their caucus and say, "Look,

Conservative and Tory cuts that are happening to these small communities are wrong and it shouldn't happen."

I don't know if they're going to do that or not, because they didn't do it on Bill 7 when they introduced the legalizing of scabs and replacement workers on the job. They just railroaded the bill through the Legislature, and as a result, we're going to have people die on the job, as happened 30 or 33 years ago. Last Thursday I was at a memorial service for the Reesor siding, where people were shot. Three died and six were injured and ended up crippled the rest of their lives as a result of a Conservative government at that time. Now we have another Conservative government in place. We put a plaque out there so that we will remember what happened in 1963 under a Conservative government then, and we don't want those things to happen again. We know that people accidentally die on the job without being instigated by whatever government action. My fear is that those things could happen again. We want to make sure that we spread the word around to as many people as possible.

There are a lot of comments that I want to add to this particular bill because I think it's a very serious direction, that we're heading in the wrong direction. I think it's bad for small-town Ontario, it's bad for small-town northern Ontario, and it's going to mean people are going to end up being shut in in their homes as a result of the Conservative government, under Bill 39, deciding that we don't need regulation of the bus industry, that "We'll deregulate it the same as all the other industries." People are going to end up being hurt.

It's not that difficult to change the mind, because we saw the Liberal government in Ottawa in 1993 campaign on the idea that "If we scrap the GST, we can get elected." Afterwards, they say: "Well, that's not what we meant. We need that \$16 billion or \$18 billion that is going to be collected. All we wanted to do was to get re-elected. We made a promise that we would resign," but Sheila Copps, in particular, says it's just shooting from the lip and she has no intention of resigning.

Mike Harris has made promises that if he doesn't give the tax cut and create the 725,000 jobs that he said he was going to do in the Common Sense Revolution, he would resign. I don't know if that promise is going to be kept in Ontario. We know that the Liberals are not keeping it in Ottawa, so we can expect that Mike Harris will probably break his promise in Ontario and not resign.

I have further comments that I would like to make at a further date when this bill comes up, but maybe it's a good point to adjourn for the day.

The Speaker: It being almost six of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.
The House adjourned at 1759.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Lt Col The Hon / L'hon Henry N.R. Jackman CM, KStJ, BA, LLB, LLD
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Allan K. McLean
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries
Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND) Interim leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef par intérim du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barb (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Workers' Compensation Board) / ministre sans portefeuille, ministre responsable de la Commission des accidents du travail	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, Leo (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Comwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Janet (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Eglinton	Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Chris (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oriole	Caplan, Elinor (L)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)
Guelph	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaitre, Bernard (L)
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L)
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)	Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)	Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, government House leader / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Hon / L'hon Allan K. (PC) Speaker / Président
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Samia	Boushy, Dave (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-Riverside	Cooke, David S. (ND)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
		York Mills	Tumbull, David (PC)
		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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